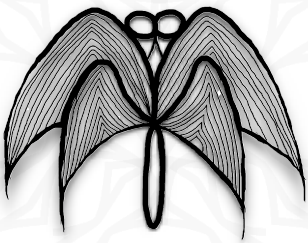
PHOBIA



REAL FICTION

DMYTRO HADROPICH. MY NAME. I AM A PROFESSIONAL SHADOW WRITER WHO DECIDED AT A YOUNG AGE THAT THIS IS WHAT I WANTED TO DO. WRITE BOOKS. IN SHORT. I ALWAYS ENJOYED IT AND IT WAS IN MY GENES. MY ANCESTOR WAS THE LEGENDARY WRITER DOMYNYK ALF. I ONLY LEARNED WHAT I COULD ABOUT THIS CHARACTER. MANY RECORDS ABOUT HIM ARE NOT OFFICIALLY CONFIRMED. BIRTH AND DEATH REMAIN A MYSTERY. AND MANY OF THE STORIES SURROUNDING IT ARE SHROUDED IN MYSTERY. EVEN IN THE FAMILY'S HOMELAND. HE HIMSELF WROTE ONLY THREE BOOKS. WHICH ARE DISSECTED IN DETAIL IN THE LOCAL MUSEUM. WHICH WAS HIS FAMILY'S HOME BEFORE HIS DEATH. I MUST ADMIT THAT I WAS OBSESSED WITH HIS WORK AND LIFE AT A YOUNG AGE. AND I WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE. HIS FIRST BOOK. PUBLISHED AS A YOUNG MAN. WAS ONLY 44 PAGES LONG. STILL. SHE WAS EXCEPTIONAL. HER

NAME WAS EUPHORIA. THIS NAME WAS IN THE HONORED LATIN. WHICH IN ITSELF WAS VERY STRANGE. SINCE LATIN IS CONSIDERED A DEAD LANGUAGE AND SOME EVEN BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE TRYING TO REVIVE IT. IN EXACT TRANSLATION. EUPHORIA SHOULD MEAN HAPPINESS. ON THE COVER OF THE BOOK IS A PAINTED FLY WEARING VARIOUS GOLD ACCESSORIES. SUCH AS A TOOTH. A BRACELET OR A RING. THERE IS A SAYING IN CZECH CULTURE: "WHAT IS HAPPINESS?" FLY ONLY GOLD!" THE ORIGIN OF THIS QUOTE BELONGS TO THE CZECH POET ADOLF HEYDUK AND IT BECAME FAMOUS MAINLY IN THE BLACK-AND-WHITE FILM THE SCHOOL IS THE BASIS OF LIFE. THIS ALONE SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT ALF'S SENSE OF DETAIL AND THE DEPTH WITH WHICH HE WAS NOT AFRAID TO WORK. HIS SHORT STORIES. WHICH WAS THE ONLY THING HE EVER DEALT WITH. WERE ALWAYS ON THE BORDER BETWEEN REALITY AND FANTASY. IN WHICH HE IS NOT AFRAID TO SOLVE SERIOUS LIFE AND EVEN EXISTENTIAL AND POSTHUMOUS QUESTIONS. HIS SECOND BOOK. CALLED FILIE. WHICH WAS AGAIN A POLISHED LATIN. WAS ALSO A SHORT STORY. THIS TIME IT HAD A PICTURE OF ALF IN A GOLD FRAME ON THE COVER. AT FIRST NO ATTENTION WAS PAID TO THIS. BUT LATER IT WAS FOUND FROM HIS DIARY ENTRIES THAT HE WAS THEREBY DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE LOVE OR DISTASTE FOR ART THAT THE WHOLE WORLD SO EXPERIENCED. PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO PAY INCREDIBLE AMOUNTS FOR A PIECE OF ART. THIS BOOK. THEMED ON

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP AND ALL ITS VARIATIONS. WAS. LIKE HIS FIRST BOOK. LIMITED TO A QUANTITY OF ONLY FIFTY PIECES. THIS ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR PRICE RISING FROM ITS ORIGINAL PRICE. THE NUMBER OF PAGES EQUALS THE PRICE. TO A HUNDRED TIMES THE PRICE. HIS THIRD BOOK. AN E-BLACKBOOK WITH WHITE TEXT. CALLED THE FIRST AND LAST CASE OF DOMOVNYK ALF (P.P.P. - D.A.). LOOSELY FOLLOWED THE SHORT STORY PSOVO FROM THE PREVIOUS BOOK FILIA. WHERE HE DESCRIBES HIMSELF AS A BEGINNING PRIVATE DETECTIVE WHOSE PATH HE GAVE FROM THE FEELING THAT HIS WRITING WORK IS NOT VALUED ENOUGH. EVEN THIS FICTION TELLS A LOT ABOUT THE AUTHOR AS A MAN WHO IS NOT AFRAID TO TAKE ON OTHER ROLES IN LIFE. BUT HIS MORE PERSONAL LIFE IS ALSO REVEALED. WHICH SHOWS HIM IN A SPECTRUM OF GLOOMY COLORS. WHEN HE DID NOT SUCCEED IN LIFE. EITHER WITH HIS OWN SELF-CONFIDENCE. SO WITH FINANCES. YET. IN THIS THIRD BOOK OF HIS. HIS CHARACTER IS MOCKED BY HIMSELF. AND THE PLOT TWIST THAT CORRUPTION HAS PENETRATED THE ANIMAL WORLD IS ACTUALLY A COLON AT THE END OF THE WHOLE STORY. THERE HE DECIDES THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO LISTEN TO THE DOG AND INSTEAD OF DOING PRIVATE DETECTIVE WORK. HE WRITES DOWN FOR HIM WHAT HE WANTS HIM TO DO TO BENEFIT THE SURROUNDING LIFE. WITH THIS. ALF SAID GOODBYE TO HIS READERS AND. AS HE WRITES IN HIS NOVELLA. SET OUT ON THE PATH OF A SHADOW AUTHOR. OR GHOST WRITER. AND SO IT IS NOT

SURPRISING THAT THERE ARE NO OTHER CLUES AFTER DOMOYNYK ALF.UNTIL THEN. IN HIS DIARY. WHICH WAS DIVIDED INTO SEVERAL PARTS AND WAS VERY EXTENSIVE. HOWEVER. I WAS NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS SO INTERESTED IN HIS CULTURAL HERITAGE. BECAUSE MANY OF THE IDEAS OR WORKS HE CREATED REMAINED HIDDEN FOR GENERATIONS AND THAT ONLY BECAUSE HE DECIDED TO LEAVE IT TO HIS HEIRS. HE HAD A UNIQUE SENSE OF HUMOR. BECAUSE HE LIKED TO CREATE SOME KIND OF RIDDLES OR REBUSES. WHETHER VERBAL OR VISUAL. EXACTLY AS HE DESCRIBED IN HIS DIARY. WHICH PARTLY ACTED AS A BRIEF GUIDE TO CREATING WHAT THE LEGENDARY WRITER WAS TRYING TO DO IN HIS LIFE. HE WANTED A GENERATION OF BOOKS THAT WOULD NOT BE CONDEMNED TO THE MERCY OR PUNISHMENT OF MASS PUBLISHERS. BUT TO THE AUTHORS THEMSELVES. WHO HAVE THEIR BACKGROUND ON THE INTERNET. THAT'S WHY HE PUT THE QR CODE ON THE BACK OF THE BOOK COVER. RIGHT NEXT TO THE FIRE SYMBOL. SO THAT THE READER CAN GET TO WHERE HE WILL HAVE EVERYTHING ON A TRAY IN THE MOST CONVENIENT WAY. AND SO HE CREATED A NEW INTERNET TERM - UNREAL FICTION. I USED THE CHARACTERS AND OTHER IDEAS THAT MY ANCESTOR HAD IN HIS DIARY IN MY FIRST WORK. WHICH I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT NOW. BY THE TIME I FINISHED MY COMPULSORY SCHOOLING. I DECIDED TO TRY MY LUCK AS MY ANCESTOR'S BOOKS INFLUENCED ME AND SET OUT TO STUDY LITERARY ARTS. I FLEW FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA AND ENROLLED AT THE MISKATONIC

UNIVERSITY FOUNDED BY H.P. LOVECRAFT. IN ARKHAM. MASSACHUSETTS. TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING PROPERLY AND TO BE A WRITER AS I SHOULD BE. I LEARNED EVERYTHING POSSIBLE HERE AND PAID SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE LIBRARY. ESPECIALLY THE NECRONOMICON. A GRIMOIRE WRITTEN BY THE MAD ARAB ABDUL ALHAZRED. A VERY REMARKABLE AND CONTRADICTORY BOOK. AND ALSO QUITE HEAVY AND. ABOVE ALL. DANGEROUS - IN THE WRONG HANDS. AND HERE AT MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY. I LEARNED TO MAKE UNREAL FICTION. OR UNREAL FICTION. A SUCCESSOR TO THE TRADITIONAL LITERARY ART THAT DEVELOPED. IN SHORT AND WITH HYPERBOLE: A BOOK ABOUT A BOOK IN A BOOK. ABOUT A BOOK IN A BOOK IN A BOOK. IN UNREAL FICTION. ALL NEW AND EXPERIMENTAL TENDENCIES ARE ALWAYS WELCOME. IT SHOULD PROPERLY HAVE NO DIRECT CREATOR. AS IT EVOLVED OVER TIME AND WAS OFFICIALLY REVEALED BY ME IN 2020. BUT IN ORDER TO PLACE IT IN THE RIGHT CONTEXT. I HAVE TO REPEAT ONCE MORE: IN MY WORK. I PROCEED FROM THE LEGACY THAT MY ANCESTOR LEFT BEHIND FOR THIS OCCASION. THEY WERE THE BASICS OF UNREAL FICTION. JUST AS H. P. LOVECRAFT HIMSELF LEFT BEHIND HIS MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY. AND JUST AS E. A. POE LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF WEIRD FICTION.

STUDYING ON THE MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY GROUNDS AS A EUROPEAN WAS REPRESENTATIVE. THIS IS BECAUSE SUDDENLY. REGARDLESS OF WHICH COUNTRY YOU WERE BORN

IN. YOU REPRESENT THE ENTIRE CONTINENT. HOWEVER. THE WAY YOU BEHAVE AND APPROACH EVERYTHING AROUND YOU POINTS TO NATIONAL TRADITIONS. FOLKLORE AND ORIGIN. I PRESENTED HERE NOT ONLY MY NAME. BUT ALSO THE FLOWERS OF MY WRITING. REAPING MY ETERNAL SUCCESS. SOCIAL EVENTS WERE PART OF MISKATONIC UNIVERSITY. AND HERE I ESPECIALLY TRIED NOT TO POINT OUT MY DIRECT NATIONALITY. I BROUGHT A BEER OF PILSNER URQUEL TO CAMPUS AND WAS EQUIPPED WITH DUREX CONDOMS. THAT IS IF MY SPANISH SIDE IN ME GETS EXCITED. AT FIRST. A FEW PEOPLE GATHERED HERE TO JUST DRINK AND FEAST WITH ME. CHEESE AND WINE OF FRENCH ORIGIN. SPAGHETTI AND PIZZA LIKE IN ITALY. THEN IT WAS BEER PONG. WHICH I DRANK LIKE A DANE. SUDDENLY. EVEN WITH THE GROWING CROWD OF PEOPLE IN OUR CROWD. VODKA ALSO APPEARED. THAT AWAKENED THE RUSSIAN IN EACH OF US. AFTER A WHILE I FOUND MYSELF TRYING TO COMMUNICATE WITH SOMEONE IN MY NATIVE LANGUAGE. BUT MY DRUNKENNESS GAVE IT JUST THE RIGHT TOUCH OF POLISH. THE LAST THING I REMEMBER WAS SOMEONE FIGHTING IN THE BACKYARD. THE WHOLE THING GOT SO OUT OF CONTROL THERE THAT IT SEEMED LIKE SOME KIND OF STREET FIGHT IN CHINA. AFTER THIS WELCOME PARTY. I DECIDED TO CHANGE THE FIELD OF ACTIVITY. I SPENT NIGHTS AND MORNINGS IN THE LABORATORY. WHERE I PREPARED VARIOUS SUBSTANCES WITH MORE EXPERIENCED STUDENTS. WE DISCOVERED MOST OF THE PROCEDURES FROM THOSE

TESTED IN THE LIBRARY. AT THAT TIME. I WAS VERY INTERESTED IN THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BEAT GENERATION - W. S. BURROUGHS AND CHARLES BUKOWSKI. AT THAT TIME. EVERYTHING TOOK PLACE PRECISELY IN THE CONNECTION OF THESE TWO WRITERS. SEX AND DRUGS. WHICH. OF COURSE. TOOK ME TO THE PLACE WHERE THE FOREFATHER OF CYBERPUNK WANTED. THAT'S WHEN MY FIRST BOOK - HAX - WAS CREATED. HERE. I PUT CYBERPUNK INTO WORLD LITERATURE WITH MY SCI-FI GENRE TREATMENT. I WROTE IT WITH QUOTATION MARKS AT THE TOP BECAUSE. AS THE NAME SUGGESTS. IT IS BASED ON ANGLICISMS AND THE NAME ITSELF IS ESSENTIALLY SLANG. ALL THE MATERIALS I NEEDED THAT REALLY TAUGHT ME SOMETHING OR GAVE ME EXPERIENCE WERE AVAILABLE IN THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY OR ON THE INTERNET. IN THE WORDS OF VICTOR HUGO FROM HIS BELL RINGER OF THE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD - HAX! PAX! MAX! THE POWER OF MAGIC IS REVEALED TO THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND THESE WORDS. I WAS SERIOUSLY LOOKING FOR INSPIRATION TO CHOOSE MY PEN NAME. I HAVE ALWAYS LIKED NAMES FOR THEIR MEANING. I WAS THINKING. IF I HAVE MORE NAMES. IT WILL HAVE MORE MEANINGS AND THEREFORE MORE SIGNIFICANCE. IN ADDITION. I NEEDED TO FOLLOW THE SAYING "IN THE NAME IS THE FATE". SO I STARTED TAKING MY MIDDLE NAMES AND SURNAMES FROM MY CHARACTERS. I ALWAYS TRIED TO CHOOSE NAMES FOR THE DESIRED CHARACTER. JUST AS ORIGINAL WAS MY VIEW OF SURREAL

FICTION. WHICH I EVENTUALLY UNDERSTOOD PROBABLY THE BEST OF ALL THE STUDENTS. I PUBLISHED MY FIRST UNREAL FICTION BOOK WHILE STILL STUDYING. HER NAME WAS HAX. IT DIDN'T HAVE AN ISBN. SO IT DIDN'T OFFICIALLY EXIST. SHE WAS THE FIRST OF HER KIND. THE FIRST SURREAL FICTION WITH A STYLE I INHERITED FROM MY ANCESTOR AS OUR FAMILY CULTURAL HERITAGE. EACH SHORT STORY HAS ITS OWN ORIGINAL FRAME AND IS EASILY SUPPLEMENTED WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE FROM THE CITY WHERE I COME FROM. THIS ALLOWED ME TO CONNECT THE BOOK WITH THE BOUNDARIES OF PAINTING AND WITH THE HELP OF A QR CODE WITH THE INTERNET. ANOTHER SYMBOL I TOOK OVER FROM MY PREDECESSOR WAS FIRE. THE SIGN OF FIRE. WHICH HAS A DOUBLE-EDGED FUNCTION. CAN GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT A BOOK IS GOOD FUEL. BUT IT CAN ALSO REFER TO VARIOUS HISTORICAL EVENTS CONNECTED WITH BURNING BOOKS. OR TO OTHER ACTIONS (: BRADBURRY'S 451 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT). THE BURNING OF BOOKS IN HISTORY WAS NOTHING EXCEPTIONAL. IN FACT ALL PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES PASSED ON IN WRITTEN FORM WERE BURNED. THUS BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER REGARDLESS OF THEIR EDUCATION OR KNOWLEDGE.I ALSO DISCOVERED THIS IN THE MISKATONIC LIBRARY. THE BOOK MANARAGA. WHICH. LIKE MANY OTHER RUSSIAN CLASSICS. AMAZED ME. THIS FICTION HAS A LIGHT POINT. IT IS ABOUT GRILLING FOOD ON BOOKS. THE SO-CALLED BOOK AND GRILL. I HAD TO TRY THIS AS WELL. AND

SO THAT EVENING I MADE SEVERAL MARSHMALLOWS ON MR. VLADIMIR SOROKIN. AND THAT WAS ONLY FOR THE REASON THAT ITS TRANSLATED FORM HAD A CLOSE CONNECTION WITH IT. I DISMISSED THE CURSING LIBRARIAN WITH A SIMPLE SENTENCE: "O TEMPORA. O MORES!" I TOOK IT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF PURE RESEARCH AND STUDY. STARING AT THE FLAMES FLOATING ON THE BOOK. I GOT A VISION. I WILL PUT THE SEALS AND INITIALS I EARNED IN MY WAITING GAME ON MY FIRST BOOK. HOWEVER. IF THE BOOKS ARE ALSO IN DIGITAL FORM ON THE INTERNET. IT WILL BE LIKE MY WAITING VIDEO GAME. USUALLY IN MY LIFE. I HAVE DEALT WITH BOOKS THAT WERE BASED ON VIDEO GAMES. MOVIES. SERIES AND OR OTHER BOOKS AND COMICS. LIKEWISE VICE VERSA. CULTURE SELF-RECYCLES AND INTEGRATES INTO EVER NEWER INDUSTRIES AND FORMS. THE BEST BLUEPRINT IS ALWAYS A VISION. A TEXT OR IMAGE IS ALREADY A GOOD TEMPLATE. PAPER MEANS SOMETHING THESE DAYS. SO I INVESTED SOMETHING IN MY FIRST PRINTS AS WELL. I BECAME A SPIRIT REPRESENTING MY CONNECTION TO THE FUTURE DEEPLY CONNECTED TO THE EMERGING WORLD IN THE CYBER ENVIRONMENT. I THEN PUT MY KNOWLEDGE FROM MY ANCESTOR'S WORK INTO THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD THROUGH THAT BOOK. THESE WERE ONLY IDEAS. BUT THEY STRENGTHENED THE VIRTUE OF THE BOOKS AND GAVE A NEW DIRECTION TO THE PROFESSION OF ADMINISTRATION. HOWEVER. AFTER MY PUBLICATION OF HAX. I FELL OUT OF FAVOR WITH UNIVERSITY SOCIETY AND WAS FORCED TO

EXPERIENCE ROUGH TIMES. I DIDN'T GRADUATE BECAUSE I WANTED TO AVOID THE JOB OF A CANTOR, OF WHICH I WAS HAUNTED BY THOSE LIVING EXAMPLES AT EVERY LECTURE. THANKS TO MY IDEAS, MY FIRST BOOK TOOK HOLD IN THE NON-CLASS SOCIETY OF THE LUMPENPROLETARIAT. AND SO I COULD AFFORD TO CONTINUE WRITING. ABOUT A YEAR AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF MAX. BOOKS THAT WERE VERY SIMILAR TO MINE BEGAN TO APPEAR ON THE MARKET. THAT'S HOW OFFICIALLY UNREAL FICTION DUG ITS WAY INTO THE COMMERCIAL WORLD AND SHOW BUSINESS. SO I WENT TO A CLASSIC BOOKSTORE TO SEE WHAT THEIR PRESENTATION OF SURREAL FICTION LOOKED LIKE. IT WAS MISERY. IT HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH WHAT I WAS DOING. AT FIRST GLANCE, IT LOOKED VERY SIMILAR. THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHY THEY WERE GIVING ME THE SAME MARKS THAT I WANTED TO EARN. THEY JUST WANTED IT THERE TOO. NEITHER OF THEM WROTE ABOUT WHAT I DID. THE WHOLE MESS WAS COMPARABLE TO LETTER SOUP. RATHER, THEY COVERED IT ALL AROUND THE EDGES WITH DOODLES. FORTUNATELY, ENOUGH WAS ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN IN THE BOOK ITSELF ABOUT THE AUTHOR, INCLUDING HIS REAL NAME AND WHERE HE LIVES. SO I WENT THERE TO HAVE A LOOK. IT WASN'T DIFFICULT TO FIND HIM. I JUST HAD TO ASK A FEW PEOPLE I MET IF THEY KNEW ANY WRITERS FROM THE AREA AND I ALREADY HAD THE STREET AND THE HOUSE NUMBER. THIS WOULD NEVER HAPPEN TO ME. AS I DID NOT SELL MY BOOKS

ON THE PUBLIC MARKET. BUT ONLY TO PEOPLE I KNEW PERSONALLY. SO I WASN'T FAMOUS LIKE THE MAN I RANG. I WAS ONLY KNOWN. I WAITED FOR A WHILE AND THEN FINALLY SOMEONE ANSWERED. -„HELLO?" I WAS SILENT. -„HELLO? IS ANYONE THERE?" I REMAINED SILENT UNTIL HE HUNG UP. THEN I RANG AGAIN.-„HELLO? HELLO?!" HE WAS GETTING ANGRY. I KEPT RINGING HIM LIKE THIS FOR ABOUT TEN MORE MINUTES UNTIL SOMEONE APPEARED AT THE DOOR. "DID YOU RING THE BELL?" A VERY YOUNG MAN. SLIGHTLY HAIRY AND ACTUALLY QUITE SIMILAR TO ME. SPOKE TO ME. INSTEAD OF ANSWERING. I LOOKED SHARPLY INTO HIS EYES AND IMAGINED HOW I WOULD MURDER HIM IN EVERY WAY AT ONCE. IN THE END. I TURNED MY BACK ON THE RASCAL JUST AS I HAD TURNED THE WHOLE SITUATION IN MY FAVOR. I WROTE MY OTHER WORKS AT HOME. IN WHICH I RANGED IN GENRES BETWEEN CRIME. PULP AND NOIRE. I WAS INSPIRED BY SERIAL KILLERS. CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER CRIMINAL MINDS FOR ONE REASON ONLY. THAT IMITATOR TO ME FOR THAT. HE GAVE ENOUGH INSPIRATION AND ENERGY TO DEVELOP THE BLOODY WORK. THERE WERE MORE OF THEM WHO TRIED TO BREAK INTO UNREAL FICTION. BUT IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO OVERCOME THE PEAK. BECAUSE THEY DID NOT KNOW ITS MAGIC. I WAS NOT WORRIED ABOUT THE DISTORTION OF THE NEWLY CREATED UNREAL FICTION. MY SIXTH SENSE TOLD ME THAT IN TIME I WOULD REPLACE THE FAKES AND THEIR COPIES WITH MY OWN NEW ORIGINAL WORK.IT WILL

outshine their creations and take pride of place with a true star-studded one-of-a-kind.

As time went on. The word bookmaker acquired a new additional definition. Literally a book maker. Although I eventually regained my position as the sole original author of surreal fiction. I wasn't happy about it. I knew that those books in commercial sales are only for business and those people have no idea what it is really about. They smile in their portraits because they have reaped the fruit from the tree of success whose seeds someone else had to plant. I was only pleased when I received a letter from a reader who kept his fingers crossed for me and received one of my stories. Even that he even understood some of my riddles and puns hidden inside my books. Even that year. I received an internet link from someone on the other side of the planet who also published his unreal fiction on the internet. It meant that despite all that. I too eventually gained my true online following. However. They proved themselves in a different way than I followed. And yet they were brave enough to acquire their authorial and unique elements and enrich the entire book production. Most often they connected or were inspired by my work the invisible guide. Which took them to my

HOMETOWN AND WHERE THE CONTENT OF THE BOOK IS THE WAY I CARRY OUT THE SPIRIT. IN THE SAME WAY. THEY TOOK ME FOR EXAMPLE THROUGH THEIR CITY. SO I ASSURED THEM OVER THE INTERNET THAT THEY COULD CONTINUE IF THEY WANTED TO. TO AGREE AFTER GOING THROUGH THE ORDEAL THEY GOT THEMSELVES INTO BY DECIDING TO DO WHAT THEY DECIDED TO DO - UNREAL FICTION. JUST MY OWN WAY. AND SO. IN THE SILENCE AND GLOOM OF ORDINARY BOOKS. A GREAT WAVE OF OTHER AUTHORS OF SURREAL FICTION EMERGED ON THE INTERNET. THIS CREATED CONTENT THAT WAS MUTUALLY COMPREHENSIVE AND PRODUCTIVE. OVER TIME. THIS IS HOW WE GAINED COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THE CONTEMPORARY ARTWORKS SPREADING THROUGH CYBERSPACE PLATFORMS AROUND THE WORLD. ON THE OTHER HAND. IN THE COMMUNITIES WHERE MY ANCESTOR DOMOVYK ALF WAS KNOWN. SO THERE. I WAS LOOKED AT FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF SIGNIFICANTLY OLDER PEOPLE AS A RESPECTABLE YOUNG GENTLEMAN. BOTH ALF'S AND MY BOOKS FUNCTIONED AS A COMMODITY HERE. AND FOR THE SAME REASON THEIR PRICE ALSO ROSE. THERE ARE CERTAIN PLACES. AN IMAGINARY REGION. WHERE SEEMINGLY WORTHLESS OR UNDERVALUED OBJECTS HAVE THEIR GOLDEN PLACE. A SIMPLE SIGNATURE IS ENOUGH AND THE PRICE WILL INCREASE. IT ONLY DEPENDS ON HOW MUCH WEIGHT IS GIVEN TO ITS VALUE BY THE PERSON WHO RECOGNIZES IT AS HIS FETISH. THE FATE OF THAT WORK IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF SOMEONE WHO CAN REBUKE HIS

practices on it. which he would probably like to do with its author. the sticker. as well as his reputation. is acquired by such a depraved fan by creating various videos or photos. which he publishes to the entire community of other internet fans. which he can often upgrade to the stage where they are not satisfied with a physical piece of the author's creation. but still at least they'll try to feed their deepest desires on the artist himself if they get the chance. i counted on that as well. thanks to my twisted mind and let myself be surrounded by the protection of hell.

CITY

A group of teenagers was walking through a meadow at the edge of the forest towards a steep overlook of the valley. The five stopped at the very edge of the precipice, which was covered with warning signs at intervals of ten meters.

-"Wow," Erika said in astonishment looking at the shapes of the city in the depths of the valley.

-"That's the ravaged city!" Rick announced knowingly.

-"That's where the cleaner broke, didn't it?" Freddy asked.

-"Yeah, that's exactly it," Rick confirmed.

-"Come back, I want to make it to the spring welcoming festivities," Chelsea said anxiously.

-"Don't worry, we'll make it, I just want to look more," Freddy says and takes a step forward, closer to the faded yellow warning signs. She modestly catches herself and turns back to

the group. He spreads his arms and walks over to a terrified Erica.

-"Are you afraid that I will fall, see?"

Both Rick and Freddy laughed out loud at that but the moment they stopped laughing they heard a bang. They turned around to see what had happened behind them.

Bob was lying below the overhang in the dirt and rock, in a steep position.

It was a miracle that he stopped sliding further and further down. The motionless body remained the few meters below the others.

-"For God's sake!" Chelsea screamed and Erika started screaming in terror.

The boys Freddy and Rick just stared blankly.

-"Bob! Bob! Is something wrong with you?" Rick yelled at Bob.

Bob was silent. Chelsea answered instead.

-"Well that's him! He must be broken!"

-"He's fine!" Freddy spoke up.

-"He has a lot!" Chelsea countered. Erika knelt on her back and began to cry.

-"We have to go!" Freddy ordered.

-"Then not that! We have to get help," Rick ordered the situation. He pulled out his cell phone and dialed 911. He was waiting for them to take it from him. Meanwhile, Chelsea was comforting Erika and Freddy was eyeing Bob's body.

-"Hey! Von moved," Fred pointed out. Rick leaned down the cliff in disbelief.

"Hello, emergency, can I hear you?"

And before Rick could answer, a piece of rock broke under his feet and he, like Bob, fell down. The mobile phone was blown out of his hand by the violent rotation and it was lost somewhere in the rubble of the slope, surely already deprived of functionality.

Freddy immediately took a rescue jump after him.

Chelsea made her way down the steep slope after the boys at a slow pace. She heard Bob's frightened voice. With narrowed eyes, she was looking for the right place to step. But Erica didn't succeed, because she slipped immediately after the first step on the slope.

She began to roll, undermining Chelsea with it. She began to rotate downwards and bumped her dusty head into Freddy's calves. They also broke.

Together they landed next to Rick and Bob. Everyone moaned in pain. Fortunately, it wasn't such a sharp drop, so Bob also ended up with only a slight concussion. The others had nothing more than a few bruises. Chelsea was whining, her knees and elbows were badly bruised. Freddy helped her up.

Together they all went into the city.

They passed through the rifts, which had a bad reputation in the area where the group lived. Thirty years ago, a calamity occurred here - a malfunction of the dry cleaner. There was a small explosion but a large chemical leak.

The city was laid apart from the inside. Laid in a haze of poisonous fumes and smog so thick that sunlight could hardly find its way here.

-"Why didn't we try to climb back up?" Bob asked.

-"It is not possible. It was very steep and we would definitely climb down again after those small stones," Rick explained to him.

-"Look, there's a house over there that looks still intact," Erika pointed towards it and ran over there.

-"Erika wait!" Rick called after her and headed in that direction as well. The others followed them.

The building looked intact from the outside, but inside there were crumbling stairs and clumps of dust everywhere. All furniture and in short anything that used to belong toof the house, the former owners left it as it was. They didn't have the slightest chance or time to take anything more than one piece of luggage with only the most storable and most important things in it when evacuating the city.

Not even a mouse would survive here.

Only now did they realize that Chelsea wasn't here with them.

Freddy came out of the building and started yelling "Chelsea! Chelsea!"

The silence and the echo of his own voice told him that Chelsea probably wouldn't be around.

He got scared that it must have been dissolved by the caustics from the cleaner. Tears welled up in his eyes. He covered them with his hands to start crying, but at that moment he heard a crash around the corner of the house.

-"Chelsea!?" He ran there.

There was a bunch of junk. Plastics, sheets, pipes, rubble, garbage.

- "Chelsea?" Freddy whimpered.

The heap began to knock and vibrate. His breath hitched.

A pack of rats ran out of that pile of trash.

Freddy screamed in terror. He was startled even though they were just rats.

He turned to leave and at that moment received a direct hit. Chelsea.

All breathless and scared.

-"I saw it! Something that moves... It's big and dirty!..."

-"Peace! Peace! What's happening? Chelsea..."

The blonde hugged him warmly and began to cry.

-"Freddy! Chelsea! Where are you?"

They heard Rick's voice.

They both ran out from around the corner.

-"Here you are! We have to move on. We have to get out of here."

Rick sounded pretty scared, but he knew.

Both Erika and Bob walked out of the building and everyone gathered at the crossroads.

-"Do you know where?" She asked Chelase.

-"There's something watching us," Bob pointed out.

-"I can feel it on the back of my head," he added and scratched there.

-"I saw it!" Chelasea spoke up.

-"Please, you must have been dreaming," said Rick.

-"Bob, you have a head injury, you should be more calm," Erika stroked his hair.

-"I know where," announced Rick.

-"I saw the cleaner from afar. A river flows through it, it leads back to our city," he added.

-"Like through the channels?" Erika was startled.

-"I'm not going," Chelsea joined her.

-"There is no other way. I'll go first," Rick suggested.

-"And me last," joined Freddy,

Bob was in the middle as the youngest

They set off. Even Freddy realized after a few minutes of walking that they were not alone. He kept looking around for reasons to be paranoid. Chelsea was looking at Bob's heels and just focused on the road. She didn't want to think about bad things.

Erika went before Bob and Rick before her. He was guided by his biological compass.

-"Do you hear that?"

Chelsea asked, flustered.

Everyone stopped and listened. There was the rustle, the rustle of leaves and the wind of a late autumn afternoon.

-"I don't feel good here at all," Erika sighed.

-"Don't worry, we'll be there soon."

-"I'm afraid. Look, it looks like that monster over there!"

Bob shouted and everyone was amazed at the toothy face made of rubble.

-"That's the monster!"

Chelsea screamed and the face really moved. He opened his droopy lids and bared his yellow rusty tubular teeth.

She blushed.

Metallic cymbal sound.

-"Run!"

Someone shouted in the chaos, and the five of them ran in the direction they were headed, and the monster chased after them with landslides of cement and concrete.

The rumble spread behind the five teenagers.

Erika ran last. The monster leapt ahead of her, slurping cement and gravel at her from its tubular maw.

The five teeth from the pipes cast reflections of copper and steel around them, a terrifying aura.

-"Leave her!"

-"Hey!"

The others shouted at the monster from the torn panels.

Freddy hit them with a piece of stone, which he kicked with a dusty sneaker.

The monster turned around and screamed at the others with a terrified expression.

That's when Erika got out from behind the monster and around it, switched to running in three steps and ran away to where the ruins of the city led her. The others immediately followed her, leaving the monster behind. But even she was not easily discouraged and pursued them at all costs.

-"Do you see the tower?"

-"Yeah!"

-"I'll meet you there!"

-"Wait? What do you want to do?"

Freddy took another rock and threw it at the monster from a spin. He hit her right in the head.

-"Hey here! Come get me!"

The monster turned behind Freddy where Freddy's red jacket was fluttering. That is, until she disappeared into the gap in the wall. The monster immediately recognized that it could not climb through the crevice on its own, so it slammed into the wall of the building.

But Freddy's plan worked. While the concrete and garbage monster was thinking through his cement brain on how to get him, the rest of the party had gained enough time to approach that tower.

Chelsea was confused by what just happened.

-"Why did Freddy do that?!"

She asked with tears in her eyes.-"To buy us time. Bob can't run that fast," Erika explained.

-"I'm more interested in what this creature is," asked Rick.

-"Mutant!"

Bob called, and not just once, but several times in a row.

-"You must have really injured your brain when you fell or from the poisonous fumes around," commented Erika.

They noticed movement. Everyone craned their necks in that direction. Freddy's red jacket fluttered around him like a butterfly's wings as he ran.

But Chelsea and the others rested.

Unfortunately, not for long, because the abomination swarmed behind Freddy from behind the mountain of rubble.

-"Run! Run!"

Freddy called.

So the four of them started running to the half-ruined tower block.

Freddy ran right behind them and the monster a few meters behind him rammed his concrete buckle into the entrance of the building.

Concrete on concrete stirred up dust and so a cloud of dust swirled around the teenagers. Everyone coughed.

Fortunately, they were all far enough away from the cement and lime right-hander.

After a while she stopped enjoying it and pulled out the claw.

So she started looking for another way inside. By the top.

She climbed higher and higher over the cracked masts of the tower to find the right size hole to fit into.

She found it, but it was a little tight. She stretched it until the whole piece of the tower broke off with her and she was sprawled on the ground.

Chunks of concrete, plaster and whatever else was sticking out of it. Horrible to look at. Metal twisted bars and rods.

The five ran out of hiding and examined the pile of rubble and iron.

-"What happened?" Bob asked.

-"It fell from over there," Rick pointed to the demolished part of the tower.

-"Did it collapse with it?" Chelsea asked in disbelief.

But the creature began to move and form from all those broken pieces of panels into even larger dimensions.

Freddy immediately grabbed one of the larger pieces of concrete, climbed on top of the creature's rubble and slammed it with all his might roughly where he guessed the monster's head was.

The concrete crumbled and broke against more cement-limestone pieces of the creature and it lay motionless.

-"Oh my god Freddy! You killed it!"

Chelsea called.

Freddy felt like a god at that moment.

Rick, Bob, and Erika examined the creature closely. Nothing in the way of an organic system. It lived purely on the energy generated down here in the ruins of the city. From all the toxic smog and fumes that eat away at the tissue. After a long accumulation of fumes, however, anything can happen that no one needs to expect.

At least that's how Rick saw it.

But what neither he nor any of the party had anticipated was that after they reached the large sewer and walked along it back to their city, the small pieces of concrete that Freddy smashed against the head of the Betonaut, as Bob called him, began to slowly to crush together and other larger parts and with the pipes and other parts of the rubble that they left around.

That lump of all the filth wrapped itself into a golem form until the end of time. It's still there and slowly getting bigger. He lives there in the seclusion of the world, waiting for his chance to climb out of that pile of rubble again.

PANDEMY

AUGUSTYN SAT IN A CONFERENCE CHAIR AND LOOKED OUT OF THE HALF-OPEN WINDOW OF THE BLOCK OF FLATS. HE WATCHED THE ROOF OF THE BLOCK OF FLATS OPPOSITE. A MAN WAS STANDING ON TOP OF IT, WAVING HIS HANDS AND CHANTING INCANTATIONS. AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT IT SOUNDED LIKE. IT WAS INAUDIBLE IN ALL THE HOWLING WIND AND THE GURGLING OF THE INFECTED THAT ECHOED THROUGH THE HOUSING ESTATE EVERY NOW AND THEN.

-"GAZES!" CAME A FEMALE VOICE FROM INSIDE THE APARTMENT. IT BELONGED TO MICHAEL SUCH A PRETTY BLONDE WITH CURLY HAIR.

SO AUGUSTYN GOT UP AND WENT AFTER HER. HE WALKED PAST THE EMPTY LARGE BED INTO THE HALL AND THEN INTO THE LIVING ROOM WHERE ANOTHER PERSON WAS LYING ON THE COUCH. MICHAELA WAS SITTING NEXT TO HER.

-"He's been sleeping for two hours."
-"I know, I woke you up."
-"And before that I you," she smiled at him.
-"Where are you going?" Gaz asked with a frown.
-"Nowhere," Michaela laughed and got to her feet so that her skirt was sticking out of Gaz's face. She just stood there smiling stupidly.
He knew she was flirting with him. It already started a few days ago, maybe weeks.
It was hard to stay focused when your daily duty was to sleep at least eight hours.
It had to be.
Everything has changed.
When one didn't sleep, everyone started digging. If only that. Jan, the one who was sleeping now, called it worms in the brain.
Let everyone imagine what they want under it. Augustín didn't quite believe him, but what could be done.
In short, something changed some time ago. From day to night. From hour to hour. Minute by minute. From second to second.
I don't know how, but it is.
I've always wondered what I would do if the apocalypse happened. I watched series and movies, read books, but none of that prepares

YOU, AND BELIEVE ME, FOR WORMS IN THE BRAIN. WHEN JAN EXPLAINED IT TO ME, I ROLLED MY EYES AT HIM AND GRABBED MY HEAD, ONLY BECAUSE IT HURT LIKE HELL

-"ARE WE GOING TO HAVE A BABY?"

SHE SNAPPED HIM OUT OF MICHAEL'S THOUGHTS.

-"DAMN WOMAN," GROWLED AUGUSTÝN AND LEFT FOR THE KITCHEN. HE OPENED A CAN OF SARDINES AND SLOWLY ATE THEM ONE BY ONE WITH A FORK.

BUT MICHAELA JUMPED TO HIM AGAIN. HER BLACK SKIRT KEPT BILLOWING AS SHE PRANCED SEDUCTIVELY. BUT SHE MUST HAVE A WORM-INFESTED BRAIN.

AUGUSTÝN SHOOK HIS HEAD AT HER AND PEELED ANOTHER SARDINE.

-"NOTEBOOK! WHAT DO YOU SAY?"

GAZ DIDN'T ANSWER, JUST THREW THE EMPTY CAN AWAY AND WALKED BACK INTO THE ROOM. MICHAELE CLOSED THE DOOR RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIS FACE AND LOCKED IT BEHIND HIM.

-"AUGUSTINE!"

SHE STARTED SCREAMING AND SMASHING THE DOOR HANDLE.

-"I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME THAT! AND STOP FUCKING THAT DOOR!"

-"I'M GOING TO SEE JAN AND YOU SHIT GET READY FOR THE FACT THAT I'M GOING TO HAVE A BABY!"

She left Michael the door and went into the living room.
Gaz rolled his eyes.
That cow must have gone completely crazy, but that's probably all of us today.
He sat down in that chair again and put his feet on the heater under the half-open window. He listened again to the unintelligible chatter on the roof of the opposite block of flats and the sputtering and coughing carried by the wind.
They're all crazy. Or their brains have been eaten.
Gaz thought about Michaela.
God, that cow is in the middle of the apocalypse and she decided to have a baby. And just with him.
No, it must be the worms. They must have eaten her frontal lobe or something.
Gaz went even deeper.
He is a dark haired thin boy with dark eyes, he was looking at himself in the mirror placed on the cupboard in front of him. She is blonde with blue eyes and a beautiful figure like a model but the most important thing was that he is genetically more dominant. Their child

WOULD NOT HAVE HER BEAUTIFUL EYES AND PROBABLY NOT EVEN HER HAIR. GAZ WAS 78% SURE OF IT.

HE BELONGED TO THE TWO-THIRDS OF HUMANITY THAT HAD DARK HAIR AND WERE STILL ALIVE. HUMANITY WAS DEFINITELY NOT GENETICALLY PREPARED FOR SUCH A BLOW FROM GOD. IF, THEN, IT WAS THE INTENTION OF GOD AND NOT OF THE DEVIL HIMSELF.

HE DIDN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT SEX, LET ALONE HAVING A BABY. ALL THE GAS AND BABY LITTER? WHERE SHOULD HE TAKE IT NOW THAT THE MALLS AROUND ARE EMPTY.

WHAT WOULD THAT CHILD LIVE ON IN THIS WORLD?

AFTER ALL, IT WOULD PROBABLY DIE IN THE FIRST YEAR, OR IT WOULD BE BORN WITH A WORM-INFESTED BRAIN.

WHAT IF HE WAS BORN IMMUNE?

GAZ JUMPED OUT OF HIS CHAIR.

HE HAS TO DO SOMETHING AND NOT FALL INTO EITHER DEPRESSION OR THE UBIQUITOUS INSANITY.

HE NOTICED THE LIBRARY THAT JAN HAD.

HE HADN'T READ IN YEARS. HE TOOK ONE BOOK, THE ONE THAT JAN HAD LAST IN HIS HAND. HE OPENED IT AND LOOKED AT IT. LEAF AFTER LEAF AND PAGE AFTER PAGE.SULFUR SYMBOLS AND INFERNAL SCRIPT. SOMETIMES LATIN. HE TURNED IT OVER TO LOOK AT

THE TITLE PAGE - PHOBIA, AUTHOR SIGNED DOMYNICK DRAKOBIJEC AUGUSTÝN CASHPAR.
HOLD IT FOR ME. HOW CAN SOMEONE SIGN UNDER THIS AND WHAT'S MORE, HIS NAMESAKE.
HOWEVER, HIS WILL WAS WEAKER THAN THE POWER OF THESE SCRIPTS. HE FOUND SOMETHING IN THEM THAT MADE THE BRAINWORMS STOP CRAWLING THROUGH HIS SKULL
TOWARDS THE END OF THE BOOK HE FOUND WHAT JAN HAD BEEN TALKING ABOUT ALL ALONG.

BRAIN WORM, LATIN VERMES CEREBRUM. THE ORIGIN IS UNKNOWN. THE FIRST MENTIONS DATE BACK TO THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, WHEN DEAD VICTIMS WERE FOUND WITH A HOLE EATEN AWAY IN THE AREA OF THE TEMPLE, WHERE THE SKULL BONE IS WEAK, OR AROUND THE EAR. MEDICINE AT THE TIME DID NOT HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY TO DEAL WITH THIS STRANGE PHENOMENON, SO THEY OFTEN JUST DESCRIBED THE BODIES IN UNUSUAL RECORDS. IT WASN'T UNTIL THE SECOND WORLD WAR THAT A CERTAIN DR. HER WILHELM FROM STUTTGART NOTICED SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT HIS PATIENTS. THE MOMENT HE NOTICED THAT THE PATIENT WAS DEAD, HE ALSO REGISTERED THAT THERE WAS A TRAIL OF BLOOD COMING FROM HIS EAR. HE FOLLOWED HER UNTIL HE

FOUND A SMALL DARK RED WORM FLAPPING ITS LEGS AND SNAPPING ITS FANGS.
HE TOOK IT WITH TWEEZERS AND PUT IT IN THE INSTRUMENTS FOR OBSERVATION. THE INSTRUMENTS DETECTED ABNORMAL RESULTS. SOMETHING DR. HER WILHELM HADN'T ANTICIPATED. THE TAXON OF THIS WORM DID NOT MATCH ANY PREVIOUSLY DISCOVERED.
SO THE DOCTOR THREW THE WORM INTO A GLASS OF CHLOROFORM AND THEN PLANTED THE WORM IN A GLASS CONTAINER AS AN EXCEPTIONAL SPECIMEN.
HE ALSO EXAMINED THE MAN. HE FIRST CUT OPEN HIS EAR TO MAKE SURE IT WAS REALLY BITTEN. HE THEN WENT UNDER THE SKIN AND SKULL
INDEED, THE BRAIN OF THIS DEAD MAN WAS CRAWLED WITH THE LABYRINTH OF PATHS OF THE WORM. HIS END BRAIN DIDN'T DO MUCH, BUT THE INSIDE - THE MIDBRAIN AND CEREBELLUM, NOTHING WAS LEFT OF THEM.
HOW THE WORM COULD GET THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY UNCLEAR TO HIM. HE WENT THROUGH THE DEAD MAN'S FILE MORE THOROUGHLY. AVERAGE HEIGHT, WEIGHT TOO. AGE AROUND 0, PURE ARYAN.
HE WORKED IN A TANK FACTORY. HE WAS BEING TREATED FOR EXCRUCIATING HEADACHES, WHICH HE THOUGHT WERE CAUSED BY THE NOISE IN THE FACTORIES.

Dr. Wilhelm didn't look further into it, although he found it more than interesting, he had a lot of work to do. Towards the end of the war, before he had to retreat to Berlin, he handed over these files, as well as all others, including the bonds and his diaries, to his wife. Together with the children, he had them taken across the border to fly away before the expected fall of the Third Reich.

Over time, these writings got into the hands of more and more people, who either left them alone or sent them on. Unfortunately, there was no trace of the worm, so the only thing that could be relied on were perhaps the inventions of some eccentric.
But Jan also had his own take on this topic. Various dates and speculations were described around the page.
-"He thinks it's because of the ecological crisis?" Gaz finally spoke, at least for himself. In a second, he unlocked the door with the key and jumped into the living room.
-"Look to wake him up!" He scrambled across the couch to the lying Jan and the frightened Michaela. But she started to frown and stomp.

-"NO! LET HIM SLEEP! HE'LL TELL YOU WHEN HE'S AWAKE!"
-"BUT I'LL SLEEP!"
AUGUSTYN WAS FURIOUS.
BUT MICHAELA USED HER TACTICS AND JUMPED ON HIM LIKE A PUMA.
SHE STARTED TO KISS AND KISS HIM UNTIL GAZ HAD TO PUSH HER AWAY.
-"YOU MUST HAVE REALLY LOST YOUR MIND, WOMAN!"
HE WAS TALKING.
HE TURNED AND HEADED BACK TO THE KITCHEN WHERE HE TOOK A FEW CANS AND JUST RAN AWAY FROM MICHAELA INTO THE ROOM. HE LOCKED IT BEHIND HIM AGAIN.
-"YOU HAVE NOWHERE TO RUN FROM ME ANYWAY, SO STOP!"
-"LEAVE ME ALONE! I HAVE TO GET READY FOR BED," HE ANSWERED THROUGH THE GLASS DOOR. -"GOOD! FOR NOW, YOU HAVE TIME TO CHOOSE WHAT NAME YOU WOULD LIKE FOR OUR CHILD," MICHAELA CALMED HER VOICE AND WENT TO LOOK AFTER THE SLEEPING JAN AGAIN.
GAZ FOUND A PLACE IN THE OFFICE CHAIR AGAIN. HE OPENED THE BOOK WHERE HE LEFT OFF.
HE LOOKED AT HIS WATCH AGAIN TO SEE HOW MUCH TIME HE HAD.

LESS THAN FOUR HOURS.
EVERY NOW AND AGAIN HE LISTENED TO THE MYSTERIOUS MUTTERINGS OF THE WIZARD ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE VIEW FROM THE WINDOW. HE WAS STILL STANDING ON THE ROOF, WHICH WAS ONLY ONE FLOOR HIGHER THAN THE FLOOR OF JAN'S APARTMENT. THAT WAS ON THE ELEVENTH FLOOR. HE HAD THE APARTMENT FROM HIS GRANDFATHER.
THE WIND REPEATED FOR THE HUNDREDTH TIME THE COUGHING AND SPLUTTERING OF THE SICK OUTSIDE, EITHER IN THE APARTMENTS OR FROM THE OPEN WINDOWS OR ON THE BALCONIES. THERE WAS NO LIVING PERSON ON THE STREET FOR DAYS.
HE STARTED IN THE NOTES OF THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK.
I BELIEVE THAT BRAINWORMS BELONG TO AN ORGANISM OF COSMIC SUPERINTELLIGENCE. THEY COME TO EARTH ALONG WITH SPACE FALLOUT. IF THERE IS A BREACH OF THE PROTECTIVE LAYER AROUND THE EARTH, PROBABLY DUE TO THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS, GREENHOUSE GASES AND OTHER NATURE-DAMAGING PARTICLES ESCAPING FROM ALL SORTS OF CREATIONS OF HUMAN SELF-DESTRUCTIVE CIVILIZATION.

THIS MADE SENSE TO GAZ. THAT'S WHY IT'S NOT SO COLD OUTSIDE AND HE DOESN'T HAVE TO CLOSE THE

window. The heating doesn't work anyway. So he continued to sit here in only a sweatshirt, despite the fact that it was the end of November. The sun wasn't shining, but global warming had taken its toll
He continued:With the disruption of the protective layer, there will be breakthrough impacts not only of solar radiation, but also of space fallout, with which brainworms also come. No civilization is ready for this. If this happens, I will pray and very loudly to the universe and the ancient gods. I will beg their forgiveness and plead to save planet Earth. I'll keep my fingers crossed for scientists trying to figure out how to stop these parasites, even though I've always been completely skeptical of science.
If I'm lucky, I'll try to invoke a magical parallel protection layer. I'm ready now...

Gaz quickly flipped through the book until he found the year of the issue. 0 3.
He knew about it ten years in advance and still did not prevent anything. He looked at the photo of the author of the book with distaste.

He got up and unlocked the door and walked into the hall. Michaela was already looking at him again, ready to give him a baby. It seemed to Augustyn that every time he opened the door, Michaela seemed more and more insane. More and more brainless.

He quickly took what he came for - the binoculars and crawled back into the room. He put it over his eyes and watched the magician on the roof of the building opposite.

He moved both index fingers to and fro on all sides of the wheel to focus on his face. His fears came true.

Indeed, Domynick Drakobijec Augustyn Cashpar himself was standing there, and in a black great robe, he invoked foreign language formulas to heaven.

Gaz looked in disbelief between the photo of the author on the book and the view of the binoculars.

It really was him. Old cranky old man. He looked even worse than in that photo.

But the sorcerer's gaze suddenly found its target and stared directly and cruelly into Gaze's binoculars.

He stopped summoning. A silence that scared Gaz more than the sight of the fool.
He had to go get a drink. Indeed, this was too much for him.
He came to open the door and took it straight to the kitchen, avoiding Michaela's gaze as best as possible.
In the kitchen, he poured himself out of a liter container that was used to decontaminate water from pipes by heating it.
He drank down the glass in gulps.
-"Do you already know the name for our child?" she asked behind Michael's back. -"Fuck you crazy."
Gaz lost his voice. His head reeled and he fell to all fours.
- "Augustynka, you my future father," Michaela whispered into his ear.
She turned him onto his back and undid his belt. Gaz was paralyzed, unable to move. He could only watch as Michaela played with his skin and then sat on top of him.
She gallops on him and to him her face changes into someone else's. In someone he once knew well also a woman or a girl and the moment he recognized her, the face he'd bought flowers

FOR EVERY DAY FOR YEARS, BEFORE THE WORMS ATE HER BRAIN. CLIMAXED. MICHAELA GOT OFF IT AND THEN ADJUSTED HER SKIRT.

HE HEARD HISSING NOISES SIMILAR TO THE ONES HE HEARD FROM THE WINDOW UNTIL THE WIZARD STOPPED THEM.

IN HIS BLURRY VISION, HE SAW ANOTHER FIGURE ENTERING THE KITCHEN - JAN.

AUGUSTYN VON DRÁČEK'S EYES CLOSED AND HE FELL INTO A DEEP AND UNDISTURBED SLEEP. HE DREAMED OF HIMSELF, HE WAS JUST IN ANOTHER TIME AND PLACE, HIS FEATURES WERE VERY SIMILAR TO THOSE IN REAL LIFE. HE HAD BEEN DECLARED A SAINT THEN, AND NOW HE WOKE UP WITH A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA FOR HIMSELF. BODY SHELLS PASS AWAY, BUT THE SOUL IS ETERNAL AND CONTINUES TO LEARN, WITH EACH OF ITS LIVES. THEN HE WOKE UP. FINALLY HE WAS NO LONGER PARALYZED, SHE MUST HAVE ADDED SOME SLEEPING PILL TO THE WATER BEFORE. IN THAT STRANGE POST DAZED STATE HE LOOKED INTO THE LIVING ROOM WHERE USUALLY ONE OF THEM WAS SLEEPING AND OF COURSE THEY WERE. JAN SLEPT ON THE CARPET, THE COUCH REMAINED EMPTY. WHY IS HE SLEEPING HERE LIKE THIS? HE MUST HAVE ALSO DRUNK FROM THE KETTLE. HE TURNED BACK TO THE INTERIOR OF THE KITCHEN AND PICKED UP THE KETTLE. IT WAS NOT

easy to tell only a little undissolved powder remained at the bottom, which she had obviously crushed in a mortar. He moved deftly into the bedroom. There she really was, lying on Michaela's bed, all white, like the wall above her head. The booming voice of the soothsayer came from outside again. She looked really posthumous, he had to touch her to make sure she was... dead. She overdosed. That morning there was a peal of thunder outside the heavens, and Augustine looked out of the window again. He was lucky and at the same time unlucky that he saw what he saw, because usually lightning is seen first and then thunder, only this time there was thunder first and then lightning rushed out of the torn sky directly at the person on the roof of the opposite block of flats. A buzzing sound ripped through the dry ether and the magician fell suddenly everyone around Gaza was dead. They simply left behind their physical containers and their souls moved into the astral realm for a while. A giant drop of water suddenly hit the windowsill and a burst of clouds followed.

POLEDNICE

It was early morning on the Easter holidays when a person climbed out of the bushes under a black sail. Tall and thin, but carelessly red, stooped and crooked. The bony body looked with ulterior motives at the large family house, fully equipped. It was already clear from a distance that it was full of children and there were also pets in it. The children in the house were mean and naughty. By their behavior they have sinned against their parents and the whole world. As it is said about children, they can also perceive other dimensions, so it was not surprising that they also angered the astral spheres. They decided to send their proven and most effective caliber to such children –

Polednice IV. Polednice always looks for children in the same way that children themselves look for Easter eggs and Easter eggs on Easter Monday, the day when Jesus Christ rose from the dead. Such children, who screamed at, hit and bit their parents, were even capable of killing the Easter Bunny, who hides Easter eggs, if they caught him. That was the last straw that decided their fate. Adults have a slightly different scarecrow - Bunnyman. A man in an Easter Bunny suit, except that instead of Easter eggs, he leaves behind his victims disfigured with an axe. At one time, people also believed in the so-called Klekánica, who was supposed to carry away children who did not return in the evening, i.e. kneeling. Basically, it was the same creature as Polednica, only this name came from a different region. Astral Spheres Polednice IV. they informed in advance that there are five children. At least Polednice will have something to kill. You know, the souls of children up to a certain tender age are very strong and powerful. It is difficult to tame them. Therefore, in the civilized world, a being

named Polednice arose. She was the only person who was able to defeat the children with her magic energy. Such a meridian comes from the spirit realm, and one can last for over a hundred years, after which it turns into a fallen being and returns back to the spirit and ghost realm, where it loses its physical form, in which it can no longer do real harm. However, this is not a reason to underestimate Polednica - on the contrary! Before you know it, you have her at the barracks. He stands at the door and takes the handle. Locked. She could have expected that. Here she already heard their roar. Gypsies. She walked over to the window around the corner and watched the goings on inside the house. Čokel Hošan was lazily polishing his bullets. It was just before noon. Every now and then there should be a nearby clatter. You know, dogs can also sense different creatures, but that depends on the unique abilities of that creature, how well it can hide. Midday IV she was excellently trained, so Hošan only noticed the movement of the shadow in the window. Only movement.

Nothing more. It could have been anything. A flying bird, the shadow of a cloud in the sky... Even so, he started barking and his fur stood on end. The weather outside was dry. Polednice, otherwise known as Klekánice, managed to return around the original corner, where the locked door was staring at her. Čokel did not have time to notice her. She took it the other way to another window. She looked inside and saw what was happening there. Two children watched colorful animated series on TV or played video games on consoles. This was Half Day IV. doesn't matter. She quickly hid again so they wouldn't see her. Children can easily sense it if they are very young. There really was one in the house. The one above in the cradle named Damian. The devilish child. He just rolled around in his playpen and looked at the stars on the ceiling and the planets hanging above his crib. It sensed the presence of Klekánice IV very well. Something unintelligible started yelling into the baby monitor. The kids on the ground floor at the TV made this up. From the second, paired,

nanny on the dining table, a childish voice called: -„ Lunch is here!" They noticed. You know, in the child hierarchy, the younger you are, the more superior you are and the more you are the center of attention. Therefore, it is no wonder that Damian's message, which was supposed to warn the children, rather encouraged them to go and open Klekánica. That Midday IV. she didn't wait and got the door right into her long and bony nose. The two spoiled children laughed at her. But before she could react, they disappeared inside the house again. With a fairly high probability, the whole house of children already knows that you have come for them. They can set various traps for her if she doesn't attack right away. She walked through the door into the hallway. The poodle Hošan was already growling at her. He jumped on her and tore off her arm and cloak.She had to use her claws and dug two deep into his snout until she hit his brain. She went through that too. Chokel whined and released his grip. He fell to the ground at her feet, blood and pieces of cerebellum dripping from his snout. Bastard!

He tore off her hand hideously. She flew into the living room. Lego blocks lay on the ground. She didn't notice them and stepped on them with her bare feet. Her wail was as piercing as death itself. She dropped to the floor so she could crawl on all fours to the carpet, where two children were already waiting in plastic armor and weapons from the kitchen. No toys. Sharp knives. One went between her ribs. That made her stand up to it. She was about a meter taller than the two children. The knife was still sticking out of her body. Before the other child could attack, she rammed her claws into the neck of the one that had just lost its weapon and dragged them up to the lower jaw until the tips came out of the top of its head. The other child pulled a knife from her intercostal area. She wondered why she wasn't bleeding. In short, because Polednice is not powered by blood, but by magene. The child attacked with two knives from the kitchen and hit her in the stomach and liver or kidneys. She didn't know anatomy that well. Halfling clawed out of the dead child pinned in her claws and kicked the other to

the ground. She pulled the knives from her body and dropped them on the ground. A black and greasy liquid oozed from her stomach, leaving greasy stains on the ground beneath her. She opened her cloak to reveal her hideous entanglements to the child. Saggy breasts with psoriasis and a wrinkled body of a dead color. Her unshaven underbelly for decades. She spread her legs and squatted on the child's face. It suffocated and writhed beneath her for several minutes. Then his body stopped showing vital signs. That she was pleased with it can only be thought of a little. She got up and went up the stairs in the corridor next to the floor. But the obstacle was somewhere else than on the stairs, as she expected. Someone poured a bucket full of boiling water on her head. It scalded her even through her black cloak full of cracks. She wheezed and moaned. She ran up the stairs in anger and looked around to see what room she would take it to now. Left first. Children's girl's room full of stuffed animals and dolls. She bared her teeth at them and rolled her eyes to intimidate them. Then someone flushed in the

next room. A lonely bathroom and in it a little princess who put her hand in her ass and pulled out a meter and a half long tapeworm, which she swung like a whip. One whistle and she wrapped herself around the neck of Klekánice IV. The slimy worm twitched and writhed and strained. The little girl pulled the lunchbox close to her and rammed her head deep into the toilet bowl. Midday had to strike back. She tore out the entire bowl and threw it at the little girl. She was nimble and avoided her. But she wasn't nimble enough to prevent the worm from cutting through Polednica's throat. A vile, foul-smelling liquid flowed from his aching extremities. This freaked the little girl out and she decided to run away. But as soon as she turned her back to the ghost, the rest of the tapeworm in Polednica's hands wrapped around her throat. She wrapped the girl's neck several times and hung her in the shower. To be sure, she turned on the full flow of water to the highest boiling power. Midday IV she pulled the plastic sliding door to the shower stall so she wouldn't have to watch the boiling water pour over her

face. A glance at the rapidly steaming bathroom was enough for her. In the girl's room, she lit the room candles, which she threw around the stuffed animals and they started to burn. She was already back in the corridor of the upper floor of the house. Walking slowly but surely, she crept to the next room, from where Mozart's 8th Symphony was playing. She jumped in ready to use her claws, but saw a child bigger than she was used to. He was a boy around twelve years old. He stood by the guillotine with a right blade, a baseball bat dozing in his hand. Midday took the first step. She soon discovered that she was trapped. A noose wrapped around her leg and the weight hidden behind the open door fell to the ground. First she fell to the ground, then it pulled her up. All she could do was randomly claw at the void and grind her teeth. The boy started hitting her head and neck with the bat until he got tired after a while and made one bad move, which the midwife immediately took advantage of. She pushed him to fall into his own guillotine that he had prepared for her. The jolt of the death

machine activated it. The guillotine first shuddered and then with a whistling of the blade cutting through the air it split the boy's head in the nose area. The midget pulled herself up and clawed through the rope that held her leg. She fell to the ground with a thud of her bones. She got up knowing that only the last child was waiting for her. She found him in the cradle in his room. She expected it to fly and form an energy field. But she didn't get any of that. They just giggled at her and waved their hands. There was evil in his eyes. The biggest ever Polednice IV. she saw She decided to take the child with her, to the realm of ghosts. It is a shame to kill a child so gifted, even though she thought about it for a long time. She could have poked his eyes out. She could have left it in the freezer, as experience had taught her, because kids like ice creams and ice creams don't just melt in one place. And that was the freezer. But this child was different. It was the embodiment of evil and radiated such magic energy that even Polednice IV. enchanted. So she took him to the ghost realm, where Polednice comes

FROM, SO THAT HIS FATE WOULD BE DECIDED BY OTHER SPIRITS. HOWEVER, NO ONE KNEW THAT A CHILD NAMED DAMIAN WOULD CONQUER THIS REALM AND UNLEASH A GENOCIDE OF GHOSTS IN IT.

ACCIDENT

ODER DROVE HIS CAR THROUGH THE TREE-LINED DISTRICT IN HIS OLD ŠKODA VINTAGE CAR FROM THE 1970S. THE CONES OF HIS LIGHTS PASSED THE WHITE HIGH STREAKS OF THE SMEARED TREES AROUND THE EVEN OVERGROWN ASPHALT WITH THEIR ROOTS. KAREL GOTT WAS PLAYING ON THE RADIO WHEN AN ANIMAL JUMPED OUT OF THE UNLIT, DARK AND DULL FAUNA AND RAMMED DIRECTLY INTO THE FRONT OF A CAR TRAVELING AT 90 KILOMETERS PER HOUR.
TIRES AND BRAKES SCREECHED.
THE DEFORMATION OF METAL AND PLASTIC, THE SCREAM OF THE FRIGHTENED PODER AND THE KNOCKING OF THE ANIMAL A FEW TENS OF METERS IN FRONT OF HIM. THEN THE CAR FINALLY STOPPED. THERE WAS SMOKE COMING FROM THE HOOD AND ONE LIGHT WENT OUT.
-"FUCK." CURSED PODER AND ANGRILY OPENED THE DOOR BY BURSTING OUT.

HE WALKED OUT ONTO THE ROAD COVERED IN AUTUMN LEAVES AND WALKED AROUND THE CAR WITH HIS COAT BUTTONED UP.
SHE WAS THERE. SHE WAS LYING WITH A BROKEN LEG AND STEAM RISING FROM HER NOSE.
SHE WAS STILL BREATHING.
SHE WAS SLOWLY DYING.
DOE.
OH NO. IF IT WAS A LYCANTHROPE, A UNICORN OR SOME OTHER VERMIN, BUT A DOE. THE RAREST ANIMAL AND STRICTLY PROTECTED. BECAUSE OF THE IONIZING RADIATION THAT COMES FROM THE RADIOACTIVE DECAY CAUSED BY COSMIC RAYS. THE MUTATIONS CAUSED MOST OF THE NORMAL ANIMALS TO DIE. THOSE THAT SURVIVED BEGAN TO GIVE BIRTH TO LARGER AND STRONGER OFFSPRING, EMITTING NON-IONIZING RADIATION THAT ATTRACTS ELECTRICITY BECAUSE THEY THEMSELVES EMIT IT.
NOTHING CAN BE DONE. HE TOOK HER BY THE SCRUFF OF THE NECK AND SLOWLY, GRINNING, DRAGGED HER TO THE TRUNK OF HIS TRANSIT. HE OPENED IT AND WITH THE EFFORT HE HAD LAST EXPERIENCED IN THE ARMY, HE LOADED IT THERE.
HE THREW A BLANKET OVER HER AND HER LAST MOMENTS OF LIFE WERE COVERED BY DARKNESS AND THE CRACKING OF THE TRUNK.

He arrived at a car mechanic named Mel. It was the nearest auto repair shop in the area. He was lucky the car was drivable. Mel was sitting on the couch reading a book. It was his favorite - Kat from Domynick. He had read it several times in a row a long time ago.

-"A king is an executioner in his own kingdom, as God is over his own world." He uttered the final quote from the end of the book. That was basically her point.

Mel looked up to see Poder.

Neither looked very enthusiastic about the other.

-"I need to fix the car," continued Poder.

Mel just had an all-nighter. He was a rookie who joined two years ago. But because he was doing so promisingly, he could afford to be alone on all-night shifts.

-"I'm looking for an ancestor. What did you knock down?"

Mel asked as he took a close look at the broken bumper with pieces of leather.

-"Changeling," smiled Poder.

-"And the body?"

-"I threw it in the scarp." The customer lowered his eyes.

-"And was it a woman or a man?"

-"Woman." Poder smiled with his gold tooth.

Damn, that boy is so curious.

-"YOU'RE LUCKY IT WASN'T A DOE OR A WILD BOAR. YOU SHOULD GO SIT DOWN." THE NEWCOMER FINALLY BROKE HIS ICY EXPRESSION WITH A SMILE.
-"WELL, I WOULD GO."
PODER PREFERRED TO SIT DOWN.
MEL TOOK ANOTHER LOOK AT THE CAR FROM SEVERAL ANGLES. PODER WAS IN AN ICY SWEAT SO THAT THE DOE WOULDN'T LIVE.
-"THEN I'LL FIX IT FOR YOU BY MORNING." A BOY IN OVERALLS NAMED MEL SMILED AT HIM.
-"JOJO. THANKS." PODER PARTIALLY SIGHED.

IN THE MORNING THE CAR WAS LIKE NEW. MEL IGNORED THE TRUNK AT ALL AND IN RETURN ATE HIS TRUNK WITH DEATHLY CALM.
ALTHOUGH PODER DIDN'T SLEEP VERY WELL. EVEN THOUGH HE DIDN'T PLAN TO. HE JUST FELL ASLEEP. HE DROVE OFF IN THE MORNING WITH A BRAND NEW CAR AND GOT AWAY WITH THE WORST CRIME. HE BROUGHT THE DOE TO A WELL-KNOWN HUNTER. EVENTUALLY. THEIR ENTIRE VILLAGE ENJOYED IT.

HUNTING STORY
AVEVANDI FABULA

BE ALWAYS, EVERYWHERE AND UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES A HUNTER AS THE LAW, REGULATIONS AND HUNTING CUSTOMS PREACH AND AS YOU WERE BROUGHT UP AND INSTRUCTED IN THEM.

TREAT ANIMALS WITH CARE, BREED THEM, IMPROVE THEM AND PROTECT THEM!

ADJUST ANIMAL STATES. DON'T SHOOT THE PREDATORS UNNECESSARILY BECAUSE THEY ARE ALSO USEFUL TO A TOLERABLE EXTENT.
REMEMBER THAT NATURE IS NOT A SHOOTING RANGE. ONLY SHOOT AT WHAT YOU CAN SAFELY RECOGNIZE.

DON'T BE LENIENT TOWARDS BEGGARS, THUGS, POACHERS AND OTHER PESTS! BUT BE CAREFUL!
DO NOT TAKE YOUR HUNTING HONOR LIGHTLY. DEFEND AND PROTECT HERE ALWAYS AND EVERYWHERE!

SPEAK ONLY OUR BEAUTIFUL CZECH HUNTING LANGUAGE, BECAUSE IT IS THE IMMORTAL LEGACY OF OUR HUNTING ANCESTORS.
PRESERVE OUR GOOD CZECH HUNTING CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS! IT IS NOT ONLY YOUR RIGHT, BUT ALSO YOUR DUTY.
LOVE YOUR DOG ABOVE ALL ELSE! HE IS YOUR BEST HELPER AND FAITHFUL COMPANION.
MAY OUR PATRON SAINT HUBERT CONTINUE TO PROTECT YOU UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN EXERCISING THE RIGHT TO HUNT!

Young Yura walked into the local tavern, an old former school, where people from around the village used to go to chat, get new information or come up with other ideas. Liquor, beer, tobacco, chowder and farts were the order of the day here. The door to the banquet hall opened and hot air warmed by the stove against the wall of the room hit Yuru across the nose. -,,Finally! Yura is here!" The cheerful male voice of an elderly grandfather rang out from behind the table with an empty plate and almost finished beer. Yura smiled cheerfully and walked over to the counter where the innkeeper always stood. He ordered beer and wild stew. -,,So what about Yura? How was the hunting today?" The innkeeper asked about Yura's first day as a hunter. -,,Let me tell you, no Africa!" Yura answered and the entire pub burst into laughter. There was a reason for it. Yura spent several years in Africa as a shooter or hunter, either game or refugees. Just like every country has its borders, so did Yura. After one life-threatening shift, he decided to go back to his native country - the Czech Republic. He stayed there for a long time with the local girls before his duty ended. Now he was finally here again, home. On Valše, somewhere in the middle of the highlands, where he grew up and where he knew it. He fled Africa from danger and fatherly duties. The men there did not like the way the African ladies looked at him. He was exotic and unfamiliar to them. As they do for him. He really enjoyed it

then. first blood, sweat and a good fly and then sex, money and violence. he was sure that his seed would grow stronger there as the years went by, because like everywhere else, you can't deny genes. he bought a one-way ticket home with the rest of the money he'd earned there, more than a fair share of which was left over. now he was looking at the interior of the pub.

-,,hey yura, and have you heard of the two-and-thirty guy around here?"

-,,no no. that must be a real cat!"

-,,well, and ask if someone has already caught him," said the same grandfather.

-,,has anyone caught him yet? he asked yura how old hajný wanted him in retirement.

-,,what doesn't have you! son! ha-ha! it's not easy for anyone to knock it off. he has such a swing in his legs that he can escape even bullets, and moreover, they are said to be visible only on clear nights."

-,,some twenty-something, but the wild boar you have here in the forest is just something," said another man, who had already read, at the other end of the table. -,,haha," someone else laughed.

-,,they won't get that even if they had heat-guided missiles!" he added.

-,,and how? yura asked.

–,,Because there are only old grandfathers here!" The old, honest gentleman summed up the whole situation, and the pub was gravely silent, only the foam from the beer bubbling.

–,,You're lucky that I came back here from Africa!" Yura made the entire hospitality industry laugh. A beer landed on a saucer in front of him and he took a delicious drink.

–,,So tell us, Yura, what is it like there, what did you experience there?"

–,,Please. Since dawn, I've been standing on the watchtower with a flintlock and watching the surroundings to see if there are any savages running around with spears," he once again amused the whole pub, pouring half a liter of local beer on the tap.

–,,So you brought a few scalps, didn't you? another grandfather asked.

–,,You know that, yes, and if only scalps. I have a proper flint in the armory, you've never seen one before," he said and washed it down with a beer. "It's more important if you can shoot with them," said one of the pensioners.

–,,What's wrong with you, grandpa, when is the full moon?"

–"Tomorrow," said the bartender, who always pretended to know nothing, but actually knew everything.

–,,Then the day after tomorrow, you have the two-and-thirty-year-old here for a portion!"

Young Yura waited long into the night before the moon rose above a sky full of torn clouds. He smiled at him and so he smiled at the moon. He fed his dogs fresh meat. One was a Catahoula, called Louis, and the other was a Jagdterrier he called Nem. Both Louis and Nem were hunting dogs. They were trained to hunt and were both a matched lot. They had known each other since they were puppies when he brought them both home. They were both about five years old now. They were in the best shape. Everyone devoured their portion of the beef in the bowl to fortify themselves properly for the challenge that awaited them. It was a two-and-thirty hunt. Yura opened his closet full of hunting weapons. He had three in her. He couldn't even fit more of them in there. So he took a CZ 557 semi-automatic hunting rifle with a five-round magazine. He loaded it fully and inserted it into the gun mechanism. He used the lever on top to charge and secured his hunting eye in the viewfinder. She didn't have optics, but she was still precise and strict. He slung it over his back over his shoulder by a leather strap and whistled twice in rapid succession to urge his dogs to leave. They obediently followed him. He closed the door of the family house, which he had inherited from his grandparents here in the village, and headed towards the northern forest, where there was one of the local estates, to which he had recently obtained the keys. He put on his hunting hat with an ostrich feather and frolicked with his dogs in the moonlight. He came to one perch, which was not so high but still had quite a view. He ordered the dogs to stay down and

wait. He himself left the door of the wooden cabin open and stuck a hunting rifle out of the sight. In the light of the full moon, he had a wonderful view of the meadow and the fields and the edge of the forest. It didn't take long for a huge two-and-thirty-something to stumble out of the woods. Even the well-traveled Yura had never seen anything like this. He couldn't believe his eyes. Such dominant antlers are only in the legends of ancient hunters, and he might be in one now. Also, what could he have expected when he heard of the two-and-thirty that he would only have sixteen? He closed one eye and leaned his head closer to the rifle. He was aiming. He had his fly right on the trunk of the huge deer when the dogs started barking. The deer raised its head and disappeared back into the forest with three jumps. Yura only had to fire once to find out that the shotgun bullet had missed its target. In his mind he beat and beat. Unfortunately, the deer with its legendary antlers was already there. He heard the dogs barking. He folded his gun and peered out of the shed. A grazed wild boar approached from nearby. His eyes glowed ruby and his fangs swayed menacingly. Yura aimed and fired head-on at him. Brok might have hit him, but the wild boar couldn't. He hadn't even gotten over it when his dogs disobeyed and ran towards the grunting pig. In that second, Nem flew into the air as the wild boar's fangs tossed him lightly. With a whimper, it lands less than two meters away.

Louis jumps onto his back and bites into his thick, dirty, warty skin. In vain. The pig just rubs off and throws his too. Another shot rings out. He couldn't miss this time. However, it still didn't work out with the wild boar. It stomped rhythmically up to the perch, into which it rammed and brushed its tusks against it a little, just as Yura was charging. He had a fourth round. He fired. This time he could clearly see that he had only hit the dry dirt next to the wobbling back of the Hogwarts, heading straight for a field of tall barley.

He overshot again, but didn't fire again. He knew that she would be blind by now. He quickly got off his seat and walked over to him. His side was bleeding and he couldn't stand on all fours. He took him in his arms and hastily carried him home, where he treated him. Louis was at his side. Fortunately, the injury was not very serious, but it was still a dog's life.

-,,Guys, I was hunting," Yura boasted in the pub. -,,And?"-,,I almost had him already. At least on target." -,,The two-and-thirty or the wild boar?' "Well, that deer, and at that moment the wild boar appeared there. He attacked. His eyes shone like two coals of fire and he almost killed my dog." -,,Which one?" "That German hunting terrier. The other, the Louisiana leopard dog, tried to attack him, but it was as if it was just an annoying fly to the wild boar." -,,How come your dogs didn't chase him, Yura?" -,,Nem was very seriously

injured, I had to treat him at home. It was for several stitches." -,,Come on, Yura! The main thing is that everything is fine. You know, even older and more experienced hunters tried and didn't get him. Neither a deer nor a wild boar." -,,Just don't worry! He who waits, he will see!" Yura announced in a pub full of older regulars. They invited him at least for a shot of courage, which was a combination of green and fernet. Yura passed this test.

The sun stung his face. He had to cover the sky above him with his palm. This created a shadow on his face and he finally recognized the region. Africa. Equator. He was just driving through the savannah. He was sitting in the back of the jeep. An Italian chiappa was swinging on his shoulder. A great rifle for hunting whatever you choose. Of course, the poachers did not have such a rifle. This was the rifle of Yuri, who came here to Africa to work as a border patrol. -,,Look!" The passenger in the passenger seat called out. He straightened up a little, as much as his speed allowed, and pointed his index finger at a group of gazelles that had just run out of the jungle. Beautiful creatures. Cloudless sky. A beautiful day. They drove to the watchtower. It was wood-metal. The beginning of the weekday and the beginning of the week - Monday morning. Already from a distance, Yura saw the gunmen from the night shift watching him. The car stopped and several figures emerged from the swirling dust around. One coughed. It took a while for the dust to settle and the individual

figures were recognizable. It was Yura and his partner Jára, also Czech. With this pair, their driver - the African Zygarri - joined the tower. They reached the tower and greeted the other hunters Zubair and Zabar. -,,Hi." "How was your night?" -,,Wild. Ligers started to move around." -,,What is it?" Yura asked. "A cross between a tiger and a lion," Zygarri answered him. -,,Watch out for them. They came here to hunt, not just to show off." -,,We can handle it," said Jára. -,,Just so you don't claim that we didn't warn you," Zareba said and together with two other blacks got into a jeep with a big dark Zulu sign on the back. The engine started and the car drove off. They disappeared into the savannah dust. All they had left were a few canisters of water for the night and one box of ammunition. There was also some left over from the hunters from the night shift, but they were happy even for the little that the driver helped them unload. Both Slavic hunters took what they could get their hands onStrength was enough. Items needed to survive the night. They brought them to the watchtower from where they could watch the surroundings. It was a little bigger than usual seats. As usual, Yura loaded his gun first, then leaned it against the short wall by the window opening that was waist-high. He brought the binoculars to his eyes and looked around. Overgrown vines and wild grasses trembled in the wind. No animal yet. Insects at most. He could be incredibly annoying. Jara waved his hand around him as he filled a bottle of water for himself and Yura from the

canister. Also when drinking to drive away those pesky insects. Yura drank his in about two hours. -,,Hey, do you know what I think about those Africans?" Jara asked. -,,Well of course, they are shamans," answered Yura slyly. -,,Well, that too, but most importantly. zzzz!" "Do you want to pee too?" Yura stood up and placed his rifle next to where he was guarding. -,,No!" Jára laughed. -,,I'm pointing out that everyone's name is Z, including that car!" He kept laughing. -,,Oh yeah! That's a good coincidence," Yura also laughed. -,,It's not a coincidence, it's fate. The work is so boring that we could easily do zzzz here," Jára pointed out this time that he would be sleeping. -,,But we would have to have overnight shifts. You can't sleep in this heat. Look, I need to go downstairs to pee. Cover me," Yura scoffed even more. -,,Why don't you smell from here, from above?" Jara was leading him as they both realized that there was no one else but the two of them. Yura just waved his hand. He descended the steps to the level of the savannah and headed for the nearby scrub. He unzipped the flap and relaxed. He defecated calmly. The grate around him began to pinch. He stopped and waited to see what would happen next. A liger came out of the bushes. A massive piece, from the perspective of about 90 kg. He ran towards Yura. He retreated and thought it best to take it to a tree. More specifically, the African kigilia, nicknamed the sausage plant or also the salami plant. It is the only tree

pollinated by bats. Jára fired his weapon at the liger, who was still able to find his way to Yura. He climbed as hard as he could, but he knew the liger would get him anyway. He had nowhere else to climb. He was at the top of a tree and there were soft branches all around him. Liger jumped up and clawed at Yura's leg. It hurt raw. Yura woke up in pain. Nightmare. He got out of bed and went to the kitchen for a drink. He poured himself water from the tap and drank the entire glass of zero volume, three liters. He put the glass down and walked back into the bedroom when the unusual moonlight caught his eye. Of course it was a full moon. Him and Louis were out in the garden and not sleeping either. They lay and watched their garden in the moonlight full of silver reflections and shading by mother nature herself. Yura stood on his balcony watching a strange glow moving near the forest. Is he delusional or is someone going there with a flashlight? Some hunter or midnight mushroom picker? But how come it has the green light? He remembered one comic. Greeen lantern. He just laughed it off to himself and went back to bed with a shake of his head. He rubbed his eyes on the way and already knew he wasn't going to fall asleep. He sat down on the bed and let his thoughts go. That was a terrible dream he had just had. He was not far from the reality he experienced in Africa. He had to hunt there to avoid being caught himself. As it happens in nature.

–,,Hey Yura! Over there in the village they said that Jen got zubrona. They say he escaped all the way from Poland and now you have his fur on the wall at their pub. What do you mean

YURA?" HE WAS BEING HARASSED BY SOME LOCAL GRANDPA LANDOWNER. -,,EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE, YOU KNOW THAT, AND HERE YOU WILL FIND THE EXOTIC, AND YOU ARE ONLY DEEP IN THE CZECH WILDERNESS. HERE YOU WILL ALSO FIND A LOT ABOUT THE VILLAGE, FOR EXAMPLE YOUR TWO-AND-THIRTY. YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE THAT ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD." -,,AND HOW ARE YOU DOING WITH HIM, HUH? -,,STILL NOTHING. I AM WAITING FOR A CLEAR MOON." -,,EXCUSES!" ANOTHER OLD MAN AT THE BEER TABLE SPOKE UP. YURA DIDN'T EVEN FINISH HIS DRINK AND LEFT THE TABLE. HE WENT HOME WHERE HIS DOG HAD FINALLY RECOVERED AND HE REPEATED HIS ROUTINE. HE DISASSEMBLED HIS ENTIRE BAIKAL BUCKSHOT GUN AND CLEANED IT. HE THEN FOLDED IT BACK UP. AS ALWAYS, IT GAVE HIM THE FEELING THAT HE HAD EVERYTHING IN HIS HANDS. HE TOLD HIMSELF THAT HE DIDN'T NEED A BRIGHT MOON FOR A WILD BOAR, JUST A DOUBLE BARREL.

THAT NIGHT
YURA LOOKED UP AT THE SLOWLY RISING MOON AND WALKED WITH ONE OF HIS DOGS THROUGH THE FOREST TO THE CLEARING WHERE HE WAS STANDING AND WHERE HE ALSO SAW THE WILD BOAR FOR THE FIRST TIME. SOMETHING TOLD HIM THAT HE WASN'T JUST COMING HERE BY CHANCE. THERE WERE PLENTY OF BEECHES AND OAKS GROWING AROUND THE FOREST, WHICH DROPPED THEIR ACORNS, WHICH THE WILD BOARS LIKED TO FEED ON. THAT WAS PROBABLY WHY THE ALPHA WILDLING CAME HERE. LOUIS SNIFFED THE PLACE. FIELDS AND ENGRAVINGS ON THE GROUND. THE WILDERNESS CHIRPED IN THE NIGHT. HE WAITED ON

the ladder from the perch to get it closer to the ground. Louis was running around. Before long there was rustling in the bushes nearby and Louis barked in that direction. Yura jumped down and fired a double-barreled shotgun into the bush. It started charging automatically. Meanwhile, Louis ran to the bush and began to pull the corpse of the boar from it. It was so heavy that he could barely move it. Yura brushed aside the bush and looked at the hole in the boar's side. Suddenly he started moving and squealing again. Luois was startled and jumped back. In a panic, the hunter fired once more and the wild boar did not utter a sound. It just smoked. Yura overpowered. After his battered eardrums began to return to normal operation after the gunshots, the noise turned into a strange chant. He looked back. There, by the century-old oak, that greenish glow floated again. Luckily, Louis snapped, snapping him out of his reverie. Then the glow was gone.

The morning of the next day

-,,Damn man! Did you have to punch that wild boar like that? After all, it's a solution! And it could have made such a beautiful fur," local hunter Milda Sr. was angry at the sight of the dead wild boar in front of the village pub. -,,He was a madman, he couldn't do anything else here. He ripped my dog before. Fortunately, he survived. Don't complain about the

fur, there's nothing to the tusks." -,,yes, you are perfect," the innkeeper praised them. From Čuník, that week was wild boar on rosehip sauce with bun or Karlovy Vary dumpling and cranberries. The whole village had a good time and feasted. She was celebrating Yuri's successful hunt. Finally someone got the menacing boar. -,,look how beautifully it hangs there! It would still like to be next to the handsome man running around in the woods. That two-and-thirty-something. That one would stand out here," hinted the innkeeper Yuri, not even a week after catching the wild boar, looking at the torn fur and the hanging tusks next to it.

-,,what's wrong with him? Is he good again?" the neighbor asked about the dog. -,,yes, he is fine. Well, I'm going to the two-and-thirty in a week. It's supposed to be a full moon. I want to have a light on my front sight. Guys, haven't you ever noticed that light by the old oak tree south of the village?" -,,yes, old Slámů used to say that fairies lived there before he died, but everyone thought he was a senile old man and no one took him seriously," said the innkeeper. -,,you can't do that, can you? In the words of some old fool," another old half-crazy from Yuri argued. -,,no, but you know it. Stories in the village. Something has to be solved here, otherwise people here would also go crazy with boredom." -,, do you see? They'll end up going crazy

anyway, whether they see fairies or not," snapped someone else from his plate with a piece of boar. -,, well, it's different everywhere. somewhere they see werewolves or ghosts, for example over there in jiříkov," a great-grandfather with beer foam in his beard took up the scepter this time. -,,well of course," commented yura ironically,-,,and i'm yelen."

full moon

the moon shone like the ice lamp of an illegal grow house. fields of corn shimmered in its glow, and even more in the distance the cornfields. both louis and němm ran around the perch, sniffing. yura was already in hunting mode and aimed at the surroundings with a cz 557 rifle. the watch on his left hand beeped and welcomed him to midnight. his mouth was dry and he needed a drink, but he was afraid he would rustle the second the deer appeared. and he knew it would show up. well, and out of nowhere he aimed at him. more precisely, on his antlers that protruded from the grain. so he headed a little lower. but he was already expecting his dogs to get involved. both louis and němm barked and ran into the corn after him. the antlers took off and a line of broken ropes formed behind him. and behind her two more from the dogs. yura waited. he was still aiming for the antlers. he held his breath and waited for the wind to rest against his back. he

lowered the front sight and pressed the tap. A shot echoed around. The antler sank into the grain, and the moment the two dog beasts ran up to him, Yura felt something like absolute victory. He got off his perch and made his way to his prey at a fast pace. On the way to him, he began to realize what he had been around all the time, and that the wind was blowing from his side. The deer must have known they were there. He was still breathing. It was huge and massive. The bullet went through the back of his head and a major artery. There was a lot of blood everywhere. Both Louis and Něm barked at him and pulled his limbs. Yura reloaded the rifle. He felt sorry for the mythical beast, which he saw in its eyes, that it had chosen him as its hunter. Equal hunter with prey. A shot rang out across the landscape again. It startled the birds, and they spread the news about the capture of a deer nicknamed the two-and-thirty deer with thirty-two antlers. The only thing that drowned out their croaking was again the strange singing coming from the hundred-year-old oak with a stray glow around it.

Within a few weeks both antlers and hides were hanging on the walls of the pub. Everyone was happy, and Yura had everything on the company's account by the end of the year. He was a regional hero. Representative of hunters in the region. That was already something serious. It was nothing a hunter or hunting enthusiast would wave their hand over. Instead of his usual feather on his camisole, he got a hawk feather. But he

still went hunting, even when there was nothing left to do. It was his job. But one night he disappeared and left the dogs alone. Fortunately, the innkeeper took care of them, but even then there was no trace of him. His follower then found a strange book in his possession. He had a section about fairies and dryads. It was written about them that they can charm the men they like. It won't even appear to others. It is said that these beauties, also referred to as forest nymphs, will lead him with their magic to their oak home, and here men must serve them as slaves forever and ever. When this got out in the pub, no one wanted to believe it. No one had a word except for the innkeeper: -,, old straw was right after all!"

FOSILL

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH STATION USIR WAS BUSY. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROCKS ON A SMALL ISLAND SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN, THEY WERE EXPLORING EXCAVATIONS HERE. A STRONG WIND WAS PICKING UP, REMINDING EVERYONE PRESENT OF THE COMING HURRICANE HAKTOR. IGOR MOVED BETWEEN THE TAUT SHEETS OF TENTS AND SHELTERS. AN EMISSARY OF THE SUTECH RESEARCH STATION THAT LAY NORTHWEST OF THIS ONE, CALLED USIR. IGOR HAD A BOBBED HAIRCUT AND WAS DRESSED IN KHAKI PANTS AND A WHITE SHIRT, NOW QUITE DUSTY AND SWEATY. HE WALKED OVER IN DISBELIEF

THAT HE HAD REALLY BEEN SENT HERE AT THIS TIME BEFORE THE STORM JUST FOR THE STRANGE FIND. HE REVEALED HIMSELF COMPLETELY TO HIM. IT SPREAD OVER A PROPORTIONAL PART OF THE MINING SITE OF THE ROCKY ISLAND. AT FIRST THEY MINED HERE BY BREAKING FOR STONE, BUT AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF THE TRILOBITE SITE, IT WAS CLOSED FOR RESEARCH. BUT THE MAIN REASON WHY THEY SENT HIM HERE WAS THE ONE THEY NAMED LAZAR - A HUGE PIECE OF FOSSIL FROM THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD. HE WAS ESTIMATED TO BE A GOOD TWENTY OR THIRTY METERS TALL. IT WAS SLIGHTLY NARROWER IN WIDTH. ITS STRUCTURE BELONGED TO A SPIRAL SHAPE. THE LARGEST FOSSIL EVER DISCOVERED. ABOUT THE SIZE OF A BLOCK OF FLATS, IMPRESSIVE. IGOR MARVELED AT HER. SHE WAS JUST STICKING OUT OF PIECES OF ROCK AND SHOWING ALL THE PEOPLE RUNNING AROUND HER HER DOMINANCE AND MAJESTY, AMONG ALL THE

FOSSILS. IT WAS SURROUNDED BY SCAFFOLDING THAT SWAYED IN THE RISING GALE AND LOOKED DANGEROUS. -„I'M LOOKING FOR MR. TOBIAS, IS HE HERE SOMEWHERE?" -„YES, THE MANAGER IS OVER THERE AT THE DEVICES," ONE YOUNG MAN ADVISED IGOR WHERE TO GO. "HELLO, ARE YOU MR. TOBIAS?" -„GREETINGS, YES, IT'S ME AND YOU WILL MOST LIKELY BE OUR EXPERT ON FOSSILS, RIGHT?' -„YES, IGOR," HE INTRODUCED HIMSELF. THEY BOTH HAD A STRONG ENOUGH GRIP TO BE EQUAL. ONE NEEDED THE OTHER. -„THIS IS ŠIMON, OUR IT ENGINEER," MR. TOBiáš INTRODUCED ANOTHER MEMBER OF THEIR TEAM. "ARE YOU THE PALEONTOLOGIST WHO TRAVELED ALL THE WAY FROM EUROPE?" -„YES, IT'S ME," IGOR GRINNED. -„BREZVA, FINALLY SOMEONE WHO WILL TELL US SOMETHING MORE ABOUT IT THAN THAT IT IS A FOSSIL OF A PREHISTORIC ANIMAL." -„YOU KNOW, I'VE BEEN DOING THIS JOB FOR MANY YEARS AND I'VE STILL NEVER SEEN SUCH

A GIANT FOSSIL BEFORE," ADMITTED IGOR. -„YOU ARE NOT ALONE," ADDED MR. TOBIáš. -„AS AN INVESTOR, I AM ALSO THE FIRST TO HAVE THE HONOR OF MANAGING IT HERE. THE ONLY THING THAT CAN COMPLICATE THINGS FOR US NOW IS THE UPCOMING HURRICANE HAKTOR." -„IGOR CAME WITH YOU," ŠIMON SMILED MISCHIEVOUSLY. -„ IT IS SUPPOSED TO REACH A SPEED OF UP TO SIXTY KILOMETERS PER HOUR AND CAN LAST UP TO SEVERAL HOURS. LOOK AT THOSE GRAPHS," THE IT ENGINEER WAS POINTING AT ONE OF HIS SCREENS. -„AND HERE YOU CAN SEE WHAT THE HURRICANE LOOKS LIKE. IT'S AN IMPENETRABLY DENSE TANGLE OF CLOUDS THAT THE FURIOUS WIND IS CARRYING HERE," ŠIMON SAID ALOUD HIS INFORMATION, READ FROM THE WEATHER STATION. THERE WAS AUDIBLE CONCERN IN HIS VOICE. -„I WOULD LIKE TO GO AND SEE THE SNAIL UP CLOSE WHILE HAKTOR IS STILL HERE, IF YOU DON'T MIND," ASKED IGOR ABOUT THE

PERMIT. -„HOW MUCH TIME DO WE HAVE BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE HURRICANE? MR. TOBIáš ASKED THE IT ENGINEER ŠIMON. -„ABOUT TWO HOURS. SO AN HOUR OF FREE TIME, THEN WE HAVE TO MOVE TO SAFETY." -„OKAY IGOR, YOU CAN GO THERE TO LOOK, BUT BE CAREFUL AND COME BACK IN TIME. HERE YOU AREAN EMPLOYEE CARD, WITHOUT IT THEY WON'T LET YOU IN TO LAZARUS, AS WE NAMED THE FOSSIL." -„THANKS, BOSS," THANKED IGOR WITH A SMILE AND HUNG THE CARD IN A PLASTIC CASE AROUND HIS NECK. HE SET OUT ON A DIRT PATH FILLED WITH GRAVEL FRAGMENTS THAT LED SLOWLY UP TO THE SPIRAL FOSSIL. HE BEGAN TO EXAMINE IT FROM AFAR FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF BIOSTRATIGRAPHY, IT COULD BE FROM THE SILURIAN PERIOD TO THE JURASSIC. HE COUNTED BY EYE. THE ESTIMATED AGE COULD BE FROM PREHISTORIC TO POST-PREHISTORIC. BUT THE CLOSER HE GOT TO IT, THE MORE HE BEGAN TO FEEL THAT IT WOULD BE

SOMETHING OTHER THAN AN AMMONITE. HE CLIMBED UP THE SCAFFOLDING TO THE MAIN FLOOR OF THE SCAFFOLDING, AT THE LEVEL OF THE CENTER OF THE SPIRAL WORM CALLED LAZARUS. A MILITARY SECURITY GUARD WAS STANDING THERE AND ASKED HIM TO PRESENT HIS EMPLOYEE CARD. SHE WAS SWINGING AROUND HIS NECK. HE HANDED IT FROM HIS CHEST TO THE ARMED MAN'S HANDS. HE GLANCED AT HER AND THEN STEPPED OUT OF THE WAY. IGOR WAS NOW ABLE TO MAKE PHYSICAL CONTACT WITH LAZARUS. NEAR HIS CRACKED AND FOSSILIZED FRAME STOOD AN OLD AND RATHER OVERGROWN MAN. HE GROPED LAZARUS WITH HIS NEGLECTED FINGERS. -„SIR, DO YOU KNOW THAT WHAT YOU ARE TOUCHING IS A PALEONTOLOGICAL FIND AND AN INDEX FOSSIL INTENDED FOR RESEARCH?" IGOR SPOKE TO HIM. -„YES," ANSWERED THE OLD MAN AND TURNED TO HIM. HE ALSO HAD A PLASTIC CARD AROUND HIS NECK. -„I AM A MYSTIC, I

DEAL WITH THE ENERGY OF THIS FOSSIL. HE HAS UNEARTHLY POWER," THE OLD MAN FOLDED HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK AND LOOKED UP AT HER. -„I HAVE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING ELSE EVEN REMOTELY SIMILAR. YES, IT IS TRUE THAT SMALL, BARELY HALF A METER AT MOST, BUT THIS?" THE OLD MAN SHOOK HIS HEAD AT THAT. HE THEN RAISED HIS RIGHT HAND AND PLACED IT DIRECTLY IN THE CENTER OF THE SNAIL, WHERE THE RIGHT-HAND SPIRAL BEGAN. -„THERE IS SUCH A STRONG STREAM OF ENERGY COMING FROM HERE. I CAN FEEL IT GOING THROUGH ME. LEND ME YOUR HAND," HE ASKED IGOR. HE WASN'T AT ALL SURE IF HE WANTED TO GO THROUGH WITH IT, BUT BEFORE HE COULD REALLY DECIDE FOR HIMSELF, THE OLD MAN HIMSELF GRABBED HER AND PRESSED HER AGAINST THE FOSSIL. THERE WAS SILENCE. -„I DON'T FEEL ANYTHING," IGOR FINALLY BROKE HIM. THE OLD MAN DROPPED HIS ARM AND BEGAN MUTTERING

SOMETHING TO HIMSELF. -„I'M SORRY, I JUST DON'T HAVE AS STRONG A SENSIBILITY AS YOU. I'M MORE INTO SCIENCE," SAID IGOR. BUT THE OLD MAN STILL DID NOT CALM DOWN. HE STILL LOOKED OFFENDED, AND AFTER A WHILE HE RETREATED SOMEWHERE INTO SECLUSION. IGOR STAYED AND LOOKED AT THE FOSSIL THOUGHTFULLY. SO WHERE CAN IT BELONG, TO WHAT ERA? SHE IS TOO HUGE FOR HER KIND. TOO MUCHREGULAR. HE WILL PROBABLY RESEARCH THIS FOR YEARS. HE HOPED FOR IT. SUCH A WORLD UNIQUE WOULD SURELY GET HIM INTO THE HALL OF FAME OF ALL PALEONTOLOGISTS AND SCIENTISTS. WELL, THEY HAVE TO FIND OUT IF THEY ALREADY HAVE THE FOSSIL SAMPLE TAKEN. SO HE MADE HIS WAY BACK TO MR. TOBIáš. HE MET A CHILD ON A DIRT ROAD. A LITTLE BOY LEAVING BEHIND A PIECE OF ICE CREAM PLASTIC ON THE GROUND. -„ BOY! CLEAN UP AFTER YOURSELF, YOU BASTARD!" IGOR RAGED. -„WHOSE CHILD IS THIS?" HE WAS NERVOUS IN ALL

DIRECTIONS. KLUČINA STUCK OUT HIS TONGUE AT HIM AND RAN OFF SOMEWHERE ALONG THE DIRT ROAD. -„EVERYWHERE! WHAT WILL THEY FIND AFTER US IN THE NEXT FEW THOUSAND YEARS? THEY WILL SAY TO THEMSELVES: WELL, THOSE PEOPLE FROM THE HOLOCENE PERIOD, THEY HAD TO BE NICE PIGS. THE PLASTIC AGE. THE ANTHROPOCENE AGE, THE YOUNGEST PART OF THE QUATERNARY PERIOD. YES, THE EXACT PERIOD WHEN HUMANITY BEGAN TO HAVE A STRONG IMPACT ON PLANET EARTH." HE TURNED AGAIN TO FACE THE HUGE SNAIL THAT SURVIVED AS A PIECE OF FOSSIL FOR SEVERAL HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OR EVEN MILLIONS OF YEARS SO THAT THEY COULD NOW EXAMINE IT. HE FINALLY CAME BACK TO THE TENT. -„YES. SANDSTONE, LIMESTONE AND SOMETHING WE CANNOT YET IDENTIFY WITH OUR INSTRUMENTS. -„SO THE UNKNOWN MINERAL IS STILL NOT GROWING?"-„I'M AFRAID NOT QUITE. WE ONLY HAVE BASIC DEVICES HERE. THE SPECIALIZED

ONES ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO ARRIVE UNTIL NEXT WEEK." -„DAMN, THIS IS WORK," OBJECTED IGOR.-„BUT, BUT, THE FIRST DAY AT WORK AND YOU'RE ALREADY GETTING UPSET," MR. TOBIÁŠ JOKED.-„WHO TOOK THE SAMPLES?" IGOR CONTINUED TO ASK, "OUR YOUNG LABORATORY ASSISTANTS. THEY ARE NOW BACK ON THE PROPER LAND IN EUROPE," EXPLAINED ŠIMON. "WERE THE TESTS COMPLETE?" THE ARCHAEOLOGIST WAS STILL GETTING EXCITED. -, "YES, THE OVERALL SCAN HAS TAKEN PLACE. WE HAVE THE WHOLE LAZARUS IN 3D," ŠIMON TURNED ON HIS PREVIEW ON ONE OF HIS SCREENS. -„WHAT ABOUT VENTS? -„WE ALSO HAVE THEM MAPPED." -„OKAY. PRINT ME ALL THE INFORMATION YOU HAVE OBTAINED SO FAR. I NEED TO READ IT," COMMANDED IGOR.-„MR. IGOR?" -„YES?" HE LOOKED UP FROM THE PILE OF PAPERS FULL OF LAZAR DATA TIED TOGETHER WITH A PAPER CLIP.-„I HAVE TO BREAK THE NEWS THAT HURRICANE

ROXDARK DEMO FONT

HAKTOR IS IMMINENT. EVERYONE MUST EVACUATE TO SAFETY. THERE IS AN ARTIFICIALLY CREATED UNDERGROUND SHELTER ON THE EDGE OF THE RESORT." SO THEY HEADED THERE. ALREADY FROM A DISTANCE, THEY COULD SEE EVERYONE CONVERGING ON THOSE STEEL DOORS THAT LED TO A HIDEOUT THAT WAS PRIMARILY MARKED AS A WAREHOUSE. THERE WERE YOUNG INTERNS, LAB WORKERS, RESEARCH MEMBERS, CHILDREN, NATIVES, AND OTHER PEOPLE WHO SOMEHOW THEY EITHER PARTICIPATED IN THE RESEARCH OF LAZARUS OR FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE SAME PLACE AT THE SAME TIME. HURRICANE HAKTOR CAME EARLIER THAN ANYONE EXPECTED. THE WIND BROKE THE TREES AND THE WAVES OF THE SEA ROSE TO METER HEIGHTS. THE CLOUDS OVER THE ISLAND TURNED BLACK AND ONE OF THEM EVEN HAD A BOLT OF LIGHTNING THAT STRUCK STRAIGHT INTO THE FOSSIL SNAIL. EVERYONE WHO SAW THIS WAS FULL

OF FEAR THAT SOMETHING WOULD HAPPEN TO THE OLD EXCAVATION. HOWEVER, IT SLOWLY BEGAN TO CRACK FROM THE MIDDLE, AND A GLOW OF LUMINOUS ENERGY CAME OUT OF THE CRACK. IT WAS A VERY DISTURBING SIGHT, BUT THEY WERE ALL FORCED TO MOVE TO THE HIDING PLACE. THE TRIO OF IGOR, ŠIMON AND MR. TOBIáš WERE AMONG THE FIRST THERE, SO THEY SET UP A PLACE AT THE ENTRANCE, WHERE THEY HAD ALL THE PEOPLE FROM THE USIR RESEARCH CAMP UNDER THEIR SUPERVISION. VE SCREENS OF THE DEVICES YOU HAD BROUGHT HERE IN THE MEANTIME WITH THE STATUS OF LAZARUS AND HE IMMEDIATELY SHOWED HIMSELF TO BE OVERLOADED. -„FOR GOD'S SAKE! THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS CONDITION!" MR. TOBIAS LAMENTED. -„YES, BUT HUMAN LIVES HAVE PRIORITY," IGOR INSISTED. -„BUT THE ENTIRE MOST IMPORTANT OBJECT OF RESEARCH IS IN A DESOLATE STATE! WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING!" -„WHEN

HURRICANE HAKTOR SUBSIDES! HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND, MR. TOBIAS?" MR. TOBIáš CALMED DOWN, BUT IT WAS OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS IN GREAT PANIC. AT AN UNEXPECTED MOMENT, THE PEOPLE RUSHING TO THE SHELTER SAW A PERSON RUSHING TOWARDS THE LAZARUS FOSSIL. IT WAS THE OLD MYSTIC THAT IGOR MET. HE RECOGNIZED HIM BY THE OLD MAN'S GAIT EVEN FROM A DISTANCE. HE TOOK A FEW STEPS OUT OF THE COVER BETWEEN THE PEOPLE SURROUNDING HIM IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION INTO THE COVER TO GET A BETTER VIEW. THE MYSTIC FOUND HIMSELF TOO CLOSE TO AN OPEN SOURCE OF ENERGY, FROM WHICH A SHARP STREAM OF ENERGY FLEW INTO THE MYSTIC'S FIGURE, WHICH WAS SENT FLYING SEVERAL METERS AWAY IN A CHARRED FORM BY ITS POWER.

-„FOR GOD'S SAKE!" IGOR EXCLAIMED. -„THE NUMBERS HERE SHOW ME A COMPLETE OVERVOLTAGE OF ELECTRICITY!" SIMON WONDERED ALOUD FROM

THE DISTANCE. -„WE HAVE TO CLOSE THE COVER!" SOMEONE CALLED OUT FROM THE COVER. IGOR CHECKED THAT NO ONE WAS ANYWHERE AND AFTER THE LAST ARRIVALS HE CLOSED THE STEEL DOOR OF THE SHELTER BEHIND HIM, IN WHICH THE EXTERNAL GENERATOR WAS AUTOMATICALLY STARTED. SECURITY WAS ENSURED. WHEN THEY CLIMBED OUT, THE FOSSILIZED SNAIL WAS COVERED IN A LAYER OF SOMETHING THAT COULD NOT BE EASILY IDENTIFIED AT FIRST. IT WAS A STRANGE SYNTHESIS OF CRYSTALLINE ICE THAT FLOWED INSIDE AND CHANGED APPEARANCE JUST LIKE PLASMA. THE CENTER OF LAZARUS WAS FROZEN ON THE SURFACE, BUT INSIDE, UNDER THE LAYER OF THAT SOLID STATE, WHATEVER IT WAS, THAT STRANGE AND UNSTABLE FLUID WAS SWARMING, AS IF FROM SOME SPRING. THE MOST SPECIAL THING ABOUT THE WHOLE THING WAS THAT SHE COULD ALSO FLOW AGAINST THE LAWS OF GRAVITY, I.E.

FROM THE MIDDLE UP. AND IN THIS WAY IT SURROUNDED THE ENTIRE FOSSIL AND WHERE IT SETTLED IT SLOWLY BEGAN TO SOLIDIFY AND THEN CRYSTALLIZE. AN IMPRESSIVE SIGHT IN ALL THE TRIGGER AROUND. THE SKY WAS GRAY AND OVERCAST. FORTUNATELY, THE WIND HAS STOPPED. THERE WAS SILENCE. PEOPLE SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY CAME OUT OF THE SHELTER AND PUT THEMSELVES AND THE USIR CAMP IN ORDER. IGOR, WITH TWO LIGHTLY ARMED STATION GUARDS, WENT TO THE HALF-FALLEN SCAFFOLDING AROUND THE GIANT FOSSIL. FROST WAS EMANATING FROM HIM. IT WAS FELT FROM A DISTANCE AND GREW STRONGER WITH PROXIMITY. WHEREVER THEY COULD, THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO THE VERY CENTER OF LAZARUS, WHERE THE DEAD BODY OF THE OLD MYSTIC LAY. HIS BODY WAS BURNED, SCARRED FROM THE DARK DISCHARGE, AND HIS BODY WAS FROZEN TO A PIECE OF SCAFFOLDING. HARD TO BELIEVE AND YET REAL.

WITH A ROAR, LAZAR PLUNGED SEVERAL NUMBERS DEEP INTO THE GROUND, FROM WHICH HE STARED OUT FROM HIS THREE-QUARTERS. -„THE STONE IS SINKING!" ONE OF THE GUARDS CALLED OUT IN A PANIC. -„COME ON, LET'S GO BEFORE WE FALL TO THE GROUND WITH IT!" IGOR RESPONDED IN TIME. LAZAR WAS REALLY SINKING INTO THE GROUND. THE LIVING TRIO MADE IT BACK TO THE SHELTER WHERE MOST OF THE PEOPLE STILL REMAINED. "HE'S DEAD, THAT OLD MYSTIC," SAID IGOR BREATHLESSLY. IMMEDIATELY THEY ALL FLEW TO HIM LIKE VULTURES AND BEGAN TO QUESTION HIM. NO ONE WANTED TO BELIEVE WHAT WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF EVERYONE'S EYES. -„THE STORM SOMEHOW AFFECTED THE CENTER OF GRAVITY OF THE EARTH UNDER THIS PIECE OF THE ISLAND, THE WHOLE THING IS IN MOTION HERE, WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE," ANNOUNCED ŠIMON AND TAPPED ON ONE OF HIS SCREENS WITH RED-COLORED CALCULATIONS.

-„I HAVE ALREADY ASKED THE SUTECH CAMP FOR SUPPORT. THEY REPLIED IMMEDIATELY THAT THEY WERE SENDING HELICOPTERS HERE." -„GREAT," WAS THE ONLY THING THAT MR. TOBIÁŠ, WHO WAS THERE WITH NERVES, COULD MANAGE. -„HOW LONG ARE THEY HERE?" IGOR ASKED. -„IN AN HOUR," ANSWERED ŠIMON. EVACUATION HELICOPTERS PICKED UP ALL THE RESIDENTS OF THE USIR CAMP AND FLEW THEM TO THE OTHER SUTECH RESEARCH CAMP ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE ISLAND. IGOR WAS JUST SAYING GOODBYE TO THE BEAUTIFUL TRILOBITE FROM AFAR, WHICH WAS CURRENTLY COVERED IN ICE. HIS MIND HAD NOTHING ELSE ON HIS MIND. WAS IT REALLY THE HURRICANE THAT CAUSED THE GROUND BENEATH THE SITE TO BEGIN TO COLLAPSE, THE WAY LAZARUS WAS CURRENTLY SINKING TO HALF ITS SIZE? WHAT ABOUT THE STRANGE GEYSER OF PLASMA FLUID THAT STARTED TO FREEZE OVER TIME. THE WHOLE FOSSIL WAS

ACTING LIKE SOME SORT OF CHILL GENERATOR. EVERYTHING AROUND HER SLOWLY BEGAN TO BE COVERED WITH THE SAME LAYER OF CRYSTALLINE ICE, WHICH WAS STILL GROWING, BUT ITS CENTER, WHERE THE FROST CAME FROM, WAS SINKING DEEPER AND DEEPER BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE SEA. THE GIANT FOSSIL WAS NOW ENGULFED BY THE WAVES OF THE SEA, WHICH WERE ALSO STIRRED BY THE STRANGE ENERGY. THE SANDSTONE THAT HAD PREVIOUSLY HELD HER NOW DROPPED HER FROM HIS MOLTEN ARMS UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THE FROST. LAZAR NOW LOOKED TO IGOR LIKE SOME KIND OF INSTRUMENT OF DEATH, WHICH HAD SURVIVED THE ICE AGE HERE AND USHERED IN THE NEXT ONE. WAS THIS WHOLE ADVENTURE A HARBINGER OF THE END OF OUR INTERGLACIAL AGE?

TENT

ONCE UPON A TIME THERE WAS SUCH A STRANGE SHOP ON THE CORNER OF A BACK STREET. THE MAN WHO RAN IT WAS CALLED CASHPAR. HE SOLD EVERYTHING THERE. ONE IMMIGRANT NAMED BULGAR REMEMBERS HIM VERY WELL. HE WAS WALKING AROUND ONE AFTERNOON AND NOTICED AN UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE CROWDING AROUND THE DISPLAYED ITEMS FOR SALE ON THE STREET. HE PAUSED OVER ONE OF THE SHOPS THAT HE THOUGHT WAS PROBABLY THE MOST USEFUL. IT WAS SUCH AN OLD TATTERED TENT. HOWEVER, THE SELLER CORRECTED HIM THAT IT WAS NOT A TENT BUT A CREATURE TRAP. BULGAR WONDERED VERY MUCH WHAT THE CHARLATAN WAS TELLING HIM, BUT ONCE HE SAW THAT MORE PEOPLE WERE SUDDENLY INTERESTED IN THE ITEM, HE PREFERRED TO BUY IT AT AN UNUSUAL PRICE BEFORE THE HAGGLING, WHICH HE HATED TO ENDURE. IT COST HALF THE COST OF A NEW TENT, BUT STILL LOOKED PRISTINE ON THE INSIDE. HE SAW A POCKET IN WHICH WAS TUCKED A LEAFLET WITH VARIOUS INSTRUCTIONS. INDEED, IT WAS WRITTEN ABOUT A CREATURE TRAP. HE STILL COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES, HE HAD TO RUB HIS STICKY GLASSES. ONLY AT THE MOMENT WHEN HE PUT THEM ON AGAIN DID HE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS WOULD PROBABLY BE THE CASE, BECAUSE EITHER HIS LEGS WERE SO LONG THAT THEY PROTRUDED HALFWAY OUT OF THE TENT, OR THE TENT WAS

too small. But it wasn't a tent, it was a creature trap. He had to accept it. He couldn't even straighten his head on his neck in it. He climbed out and read the manual again. It said to leave the tent in some strange places, like a wild forest, a clearing with historical records, or a crossroads. It could easily be a garden, as long as there was something about it that could attract the creatures to enter the tent area. Bulgar wondered if it wouldn't be enough that the only thing of interest in his garden would be the dilapidated tent for which he had left half his weekly salary. So he left it in his garden and, according to the instructions, he was supposed to insert a candle into it at dusk and leave it there overnight. It seemed to him like a bad joke. The tent is going to burn! Well, it didn't catch fire. The candle burned inside him and made strange patterns on the fabric walls that reminded him of the ritual fires he had read about in some book when he still had the patience for it. Before going to sleep, he checked whether it was burning. He didn't burn. He decided that if it didn't burn and nothing got caught in it, he would leave it to the children. But the next morning he was more than surprised. Stan was tight-lipped. He opened it with a little force and peered inside. A broken leprechaun lay in it. He was as caught as mice in a trap. Bulgar turned white. He quickly took a position next to the tent and had to catch his breath. -„Sir!" He called the creature from the tent. That didn't make Bulgar any better. -„If you let me go, I will pay you more than your

MAJESTY!" BULGAR HAD TO BREATHE FOR A WHILE LONGER AND WAIT FOR HIS STOMACH TO SETTLE. FINALLY, HE STARTED TALKING TO THE BEING FROM OUTSIDE. -„HOW ARE YOU TALKING?" -„I'M ALSO LARGELY HUMANOID LIKE YOU SIR. I'M JUST LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE MATERIAL AND DIMENSIONAL ELEMENTS OF MAGIC." AS BULGAR LISTENED TO HIM LIKE THIS, HE CONSIDERED WHETHER TO LEAVE HIM THERE AFTER ALL. BETTER, JUST IN CASE. BROKEN AND CAUGHT LIKE A MOUSE IN A TRAP:-, "I'LL LEAVE YOU THE POUCH, JUST LET ME GO," CAME THE PLEADING VOICE OF THE RED LEPRECHAUN IN IN A GREEN SUIT. BULGAR WAS INTRIGUED BY THE OFFER. DESPITE THE FACT THAT HE HAD THE FEELING THAT HE WAS HALLUCINATING, HE ACCEPTED IT AND FREED THE GOBLIN FROM THE GRIP OF THE TRAP. HE CLIMBED OUT OF THE TENT IN PAIN AND WAILING AND ... DISAPPEARED. -„CRUCINAL HERGOT!"

BULGAR LAMENTED. BUT WHEN FOLDING THE TENT, A BAG OF COINS APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE NEXT TO IT. BULGAR TOOK IT AND POURED IT INTO HIS PALM. IT WAS PENNIES. HUNDREDS TO THOUSANDS OF PENNIES.

We were driving in a car. Raindrops fell slowly and rhythmically on the windshield and hood. All the seats were occupied and above all - the trunk was full. In it lay the broken body of a female. His guts were crawling out and the car creaked and moaned with every movement. Everyone in the car knew very well what to do and so everyone was silent. Even the car dealers were silent. Which is saying something. The load we have in the back of the trunk was already several times. We are their hunters. Once we get our hands on it. We won't let it go. We load her into the trunk and take her to a lonely place where we will finish her life. But the one we have now in the trunk is already very badly damaged. One of us threw her to the ground as she struggled. If she were a little more human. especially in appearance. She could be declared a crossbreed. Which is the urban designation for a Christian woman. She came from a religious family. She devoted herself to her so much that she could be compared to a member of that family who needs the kind of attention she was getting. We finally

arrived. We were far beyond the train station. This area belonged only to outlaws. I pulled the handbrake and turned off the engine. They all grabbed the door handles and climbed out. I opened the trunk and looked into that clouded eye. It was cracked. We each took her by a part of her body and threw her on the dirty and wet ground. You could see she was suffering. Two of us were in favor of just leaving her there to go on her own way over time. The other two of us, including myself, were of the opinion that it would be better to arrive at the spot. We searched the scene for a while for our final weapon. It was a metal weight. It weighed about fifteen kilos. But before the two of us reached our victim, the other two were beating her head to head with a telescope. However, it was not brand new. So during one of the blows, its telescopic part flew away. They already saw us coming back and moved out of the way. Clench your legs, engage every muscle in your arms and throw a little weight. That piece of metal. Then, in an adrenaline-slow moment, to watch how that piece of iron destroys her completely. How he penetrated her body through her glassy gaze. I will never forget the sound of its components crushing.

FINGER GAME

JOURNALIST BALTAZAR GOT INTO A TAXI AT THE AIRPORT OF THE CAPITAL SUKHUMI. HE WAS ABKHAZIAN, AS WAS HIS TAXI DRIVER.

-„WELCOME BACK HOME MR. BALTAZAR," HE GREETED HIM IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR.

-„WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE BROUGHT TO YOUR HOME, AS USUAL? BALTAZAR LOOKED UP FROM UNDER A WHITE FLANNEL HAT THAT MATCHED HIS SUIT, ALSO WHITE AND FLANNEL.

-„YES, TAKE ME TO THE RIVIERA," HE SPECIFIED, BECAUSE HE HAD MORE HOMES. THE YOUNG TAXI DRIVER NODDED, STRAIGHTENED HIS REAR VIEW MIRROR, PUT IT IN GEAR AND DROVE OFF. HE TOOK A FAMOUS JOURNALIST AND A NATIVE OF ABKHAZIA NAMED BALTAZAR THROUGH THE ENTIRE CITY, WHICH WAS THE METROPOLIS OF ONE OF THE MOST VISITED COUNTRIES IN RUSSIA. THE ROAD WAS DRY AND THE RAINDROPS RHYTHMICALLY FELL ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE CAR. A YELLOW TAXI STOPPED NEAR THE BEACH OF

THE TOWN, WHERE HIS REGULAR CUSTOMER GOT OUT, LEANING ON HIS CANE, AND WALKED AT A LEISURELY PACE TO HIS HOUSE. FIRST HE UNLOCKED IT AND ENTERED, ONLY WHEN HE CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM DID THE TAXI DRIVE OFF. HE TRADITIONALLY CHANGED INTO RABBIT FUR SLIPPERS. HE REACHED THE KITCHEN, WHERE HE TURNED ON THE CRYSTAL CHANDELIER HE HAD BROUGHT FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC. HE PUT HIS HAT ON THE LINE AND PULLED OUT HIS HOMEMADE AJVAR, WHICH HE LOVED SO MUCH, FROM THE PANTRY. A FAMILY RECIPE. FIRST, HE STUCK THE DINNER KNIFE UNDER THE LID OF THE CANNING JAR AND LOOSENED IT WITH A LIGHT LEVER, BEFORE HE OPENED THE JAR. AFTER UNSCREWING THE CAP, HE SCOOPED UP A BIT OF THAT EXCEPTIONAL AJVAR ON THE FLAT SIDE OF THE KNIFE. HE KNEW THAT THE KNIFE SHOULD NOT BE PUT IN THE MOUTH, BUT HE WAS HAPPY TO DO IT ANYWAY. IT WAS A CUTE BAD HABIT OF HIS THAT HE KEPT ONLY AT HOME. NO ONE KNEW ABOUT HIM, AT LEAST THEY HOPED SO. HE ATE THE WHOLE GLASS LIKE THIS, NOT EVEN BITING A PIECE OF PASTRY TO GO WITH IT. HE DIDN'T HAVE ANY AT HOME ANYWAY. MAYBE A PIECE OF HARDENED LEFTOVER BREAD, AND THAT TOO IF HE LOOKED CAREFULLY. HE HADN'T BEEN HOME FOR MORE THAN THREE MONTHS. HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS SHOULD BE

CONTACTED. JUST BECAUSE OF THE CONFUSION, HE DIDN'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO START AFTER RETURNING TO HIS HOMELAND. HE WALKED OVER TO THE CALENDAR WALL IN THE NEXT ROOM. IT WAS AUGUST 25TH. TOMORROW WILL BE THE DAY OF RECOGNITION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF ABKHAZIA. ACTUALLY, IT WILL BE IN A FEW HOURS, HE LOOKED AT THE CLOCK THAT HUNG ON THE WALL OPPOSITE THE CALENDAR. IT WAS EIGHT IN THE EVENING. HE CHECKED THEM WITH HIS WRISTWATCH, THEY WOULD NEED READJUSTING. SO YOU RESET THEM. HE HAD THEM ON HIS LEFT HAND. THE ONE WHERE HE WAS MISSING HALF OF HIS MIDDLE FINGER AND ONE JOINT OF HIS LITTLE FINGER.

IN THE MORNING, HE TOOK IT TO THE LOCAL RESIDENTIAL AREA, WHERE HIS GOOD OLD FRIEND JIREK WAS LIVING HIS LIFE IN HIS HOUSE. -„YOU SHOULD HIRE ANOTHER MAID, JIREKA, THAT ONE IS BARELY ENOUGH TO CLEAN THE WHOLE HOUSE," JOKED BALTAZAR AT THE WELCOME AND TOOK OFF HIS HAT WHEN HE ENTERED THE ROOM. -„ BAAL! YOU OLD DEVIL," THE OLD MAN ON THE BED COUGHED. -„WHERE DID THE DEVILS BRING YOU FROM?" -„I RETURNED FROM CRIMEA LAST NIGHT." -„BUT? SO THE GAMBLING DIDN'T GET OVER YOU EVEN AFTER FORTY?" THE OLD MAN WONDERED. BALTAZAR JUST SMILED. "SOON, A LONG ARTICLE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING THERE WILL

BE PUBLISHED," THE JOURNALIST BOASTED. -„UNFORTUNATELY, I'M NOT SURE IF I'LL LIVE TO SEE IT, MY FRIEND. MY CONDITION IS GETTING MORE SERIOUS EVERY DAY," OLD JIREK COUGHED AGAIN. BALTAZAR GRABBED HIS HANDS WITH HIS RIGHT HAND AND CLOSED HIS EYES. -„YOU WILL GO TO PARADISE JIREK, I CAN FEEL IT. YOU'RE MY FAMILY, I'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING AFTER YOU'RE GONE.
YOU HAVE MY WORD OF HONOR," THE JOURNALIST PAUSED. -„I KNOW. ONLY A REAL MAN CAN LEAVE WITH HONOR." -„THE WAY JIREK ALWAYS TAUGHT ME." -„PLEASE ARRANGE SO THAT MY GRANDDAUGHTER DOES NOT LOOK INTO THE COFFIN WHEN EVERYONE IS THERE LOOKING AT ME EMBALMED, LIKE SOME EXHIBITION IN A MUSEUM. SHE REALLY, REALLY LIKES MUSEUMS AND I DON'T WANT TO SPOIL IT FOR HER." -„JIREK, DON'T WORRY, YOU HAVE MY WORD." "BAAL, YOU HAVE NEVER TOLD ME WHERE YOU LOST YOUR FINGER ON YOUR RIGHT HAND," THE OLD MAN ON THE BED CHANGED THE SUBJECT. BALTHAZAR STOPPED. YOU COULD TELL HE DIDN'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. BUT THE OLD MAN'S EYES WERE ABLE TO MELT THE ICE IN BALTHAZAR'S HEART. -„MY DOG BIT HIM." THE OLD MAN'S HOARSE LAUGH CUT THROUGH THE TENSION FOR A MOMENT. -„I EXPECTED A LOT, BUT THIS?" A NURSE APPEARED BEHIND THEM OUT OF NOWHERE. -„PLEASE, SIR,

LEAVE, MR. JIREK MUST BE CALM!" SHE WAS UNPLEASANT, AS NURSES CAN BE SOMETIMES. SO BALTHAZAR SAID GOODBYE AND WENT OUT. NORMALLY HE WOULD HAVE CALLED A TAXI DRIVER, BUT TODAY WAS INDEPENDENCE DAY. EVERYWHERE OUTSIDE THERE WERE DECORATIONS ALL OVER THE CITY. THE MAIN STREET WAS LINED WITH DECORATIONS ON LAMPS THAT COVERED EACH OTHER IN VARIOUS WAYS. PEOPLE WERE CHEERFUL AND SMILING. HE COULDN'T HAVE PLANNED SUCH A HOMECOMING BETTER. THERE WAS AN ATMOSPHERE OF PREPARATION FOR THE DINNER, WHEN THE WHOLE TOWN WOULD BE SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE IN COSTUMES AND COVERED IN FIREWORKS. MUSIC AND SINGING WILL FLY LIKE SUMMER BUTTERFLIES ALL OVER THE CITY. CONFETTI INSTEAD OF STRIFE. IT WAS AUGUST 26 - A DAY WHEN EVERYONE THINKS ONLY OF CELEBRATIONS.

HE EVENTUALLY FELL INTO ONE OF HIS FAVORITE SPOTS. HE'S BEEN COMING HERE ALL HIS LIFE WHEN HE'S IN HIS HOMETOWN. JIREK PULLED HIM OUT OF HERE. HERE IN THIS PUTICA WITH A SMALL INSCRIPTION ABOVE THE ENTRANCE ON A YELLOWED GOROŽANKIN SIGN. IT MEANT WINE AND TOBACCO. THE SAME SIGN WAS ALMOST EVERYWHERE IN THE CITY, BUT ONLY THIS ONE WAS OLD ENOUGH TO BE THE REAL

ONE. AND REALLY, THEY ONLY HAD LOCAL WINES AND TOBACCO HERE. ILJA, THE BARMAN, STOOD BEHIND THE BAR IN A CLASSIC WAY, AND AS SOON AS HE SAW BALTAZAR, HE SHOUTED. -„SPILL THE RED MY FRIEND AND CUT THE CIGARS! WE WILL CELEBRATE!" BALTHAZAR EXCLAIMED.
-„SO HOW ARE YOU DOING? I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE IN A QUARTER OF A YEAR, MAN." -„FOOTBALL IS STAGNATING. THE NATIONAL LEAGUE LOST ITS BEST PLAYER THIS SEASON. THE BASTARD WHO PINCHED HIM GOT A RED CARD. BUT WITH THAT CAME A DECLINE IN BETTING. THIS YEAR IS GOING TO BE MISERABLE." -„THAT'S PRETTY UNPLEASANT NEWS," SIGHED BALTAZAR. -„ BUT WE WILL NOT DEAL WITH THAT TODAY. IT'S A DAY TO RECOGNIZE OUR FREEDOM!" -„WILL OTHER GUESTS ARRIVE, ILJO?" -„YES, I HAVE A RESERVATION HERE FROM THE AFTERNOON." -„GREAT," BALTAZAR TOASTED WITH ILJA. THE BUSINESS WAS FILLED BEFORE THEY HAD TIME TO FINISH THE THIRD GLASS OF TWO DECKS. AT LUNCH THERE WAS EVEN THE FAMOUS HOT SAUCES FOR WHICH ABKHAZIA WAS SO FAMOUS. AROUND THEM WERE FRESH PASTRIES, SAUSAGES AND OTHER DISHES, SUCH AS CHEESES, NUTS AND CANAPÉS. THEIR TABLE WAS FILLED WITH FAMILIAR FACES, IT WAS DAŠKA AND IVANYA. A MATURE LADY A LITTLE YOUNGER THAN BALTAZAR. THEY

HAD KNOWN EACH OTHER FROM THIS COMPANY FOR A LONG TIME. "WILL YOU FINALLY TELL US WHERE YOUVE BEEN FOR SO LONG?" ONE OF THEM ASKED AS SHE PLACED A PIECE OF GOTHAM SALAMI ON HER PLATE. "WHEN WE MOVE TO THE BACK LOUNGE," BALTAZAR DECIDED. "SO WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?" -„WHEN THE GUESTS HAVE CLEARED OUT." THEY WAITED UNTIL NIGHT. THE PUB CLOSED TO VISITORS A LITTLE BEFORE MIDNIGHT, SO THAT EVERYONE COULD GO OUTSIDE TO THE STREET, WHERE THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL VIEW OF THE CITY SKY ILLUMINATED BY THE TRADITIONAL MIDNIGHT FIREWORKS. AFTER THAT, THE PEOPLE ON THE STREETS DISPERSED TO THEIR HOMES OR TO OTHER ENTERTAINMENT. AS WELL AS THE FEW FAMILIAR GUESTS OF THIS ESTABLISHMENT, WHO MOVED INSIDE TO THE BACK LOUNGE, WHERE THE GODFATHERS AND GODMOTHERS OF THE TOWN HAVE BEEN MEETING SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL. HERE, BEHIND LOCKED DOORS, GAMBLING OR BUSINESS WAS NEGOTIATED REGULARLY. -„TELL US WHERE YOUVE BEEN," THE GUESTS COULDN'T WAIT FOR BALTAZAR'S TRAVELOGUE. -„ IN CRIMEA. I HAD AN URGE TO VISIT THAT DANGEROUS PLACE. WE ALL KNOW THAT THERE WAS ANNEXATION, BUT I FOUND OUT THE REAL REASON WHY IT HAPPENED. THE MEDIA TELLS US LIES." A MURMUR OF WHISPERS AND AMAZEMENT FILLED THE

ROOM. -„SO WHAT'S GOING ON THERE? BALTHAZAR, SAY." -„IN FACT, PARANORMAL ACTIVITY HAS OCCURRED THERE. THAT'S WHY THE WHOLE OF CRIMEA IS OCCUPIED." -„I HAD THE FEELING THAT THERE WAS A CIVIL WAR THERE," SAID ONE OF THE GUESTS. -„IT IS PARTLY SO. BUT THE MEDIA ONLY GIVE US A HUNDREDTH OF THE TRUTH. THE SITUATION IN CRIMEA BORDERS ON CIVIL WAR AND ANNEXATION. HOWEVER, THE BIGGEST ENEMY THERE ARE THE SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA. IT IS COMPLICATED BY THE ENTIRE ARMY, WHICH HOLDS THE ENTIRE TERRITORY IN A COMPLETE GRIP AND SUFFOCATES THE WHOLE THING UNDER COVER. NO WONDER, AN INTERNATIONAL SCANDAL COULD ARISE FROM THIS." -„AND WHAT KIND OF PHENOMENA IS HAPPENING THERE? -„ I CAN'T SAY THAT. I'M JUST AN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST. IN JUST A FEW DAYS, NEXT WEEK, MY ARTICLE WILL BE PUBLISHED IN A LOCAL NEWSPAPER SPECIAL."

-„YOU ARE SO BRAVE BALTHAZAR!" DRUNK IVANYA WAS LEANING TOWARDS HIM. HE ALWAYS LIKED HER. HER BEAUTY WAS DUE TO HER INTELLIGENCE. BALTAZAR WAS HIMSELF DESCRIBED AS SAPOSEXUAL. INTELLIGENT PEOPLE EXCITED HIM, BUT EVEN THAT HAD ITS COUNTERBALANCE. HE ALSO CONSIDERED HIMSELF SAPOPHOBIC - AFRAID OF STUPID PEOPLE. THAT'S WHY HE LIKED TO CHOOSE THIS SECRET SOCIETY, WHICH

WAS SUPPOSED TO ELIMINATE FROM ITS ORIGINAL SELECTION PEOPLE WHO WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND SOMETHING LIKE A SECRET.

-„HOW DID YOU GET THIS JOB? A GENTLEMAN ASKED.

-„MY FRIEND JIREK OFFERED ME THIS JOB." THE NAME CAUSED A STIR IN THE ROOM. -„LET ME TALK MORE ABOUT MY PROFESSION. I'M NOT SURE IF ANY OF YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH WESTERN LITERATURE, BUT FOR EXAMPLE, THIS GUY HUNTER S. THOMPSON WAS ALSO A FAMOUS JOURNALIST. HE IS MOST FAMOUS FOR HIS BOOK ABOUT LIFE IN THE HELLS ANGELS GANG, I.E. BIKERS COMMITTED TO THE ONLY LOUD ENGINE - HARLEY DAVIDSON. EVEN THIS BRAVE MAN CAME UP WITH THE NAME GONZO - I.E. A SUBJECTIVE VIEW OF SOME TARGET TOPIC, WHICH THE JOURNALIST SHOULD EXPERIENCE HIMSELF AND TAKE AWAY HIS EXPERIENCE. WELL, I'M AN EASTERN HUNTER S. THOMPSON. WAIT FOR MY ARTICLE. IT WILL OPEN YOUR EYES," HE CONCLUDED HIS PARTLY ADVERTISING MESSAGE AND WASHED IT DOWN WITH WINE. HE RECEIVED APPLAUSE.

-„I HAVE ONE MORE QUESTION," ANNOUNCED SOMEONE ELSE.

-„YES?"

-„WHERE DID YOU LOSE YOUR FINGERS?" BALTAZAR CLAPPED AND RAISED HIS LEFT HAND IN THE AIR FOR

EVERYONE TO SEE. -„WHEN PLAYING WITH FINGERS," HE SAID. -„SEVERAL DECADES AGO, RIGHT HERE IN THIS ROOM." THE SOUND OF WHISPERS ECHOED THROUGH THE ROOM AGAIN. -„AND ON THE RIGHT HAND? BALTHAZAR STOPPED. THERE WAS A MOMENT OF SILENCE. -„WHEN FISHING IN SIBERIA," HE FINALLY SAID. THIS AMUSED SOME OF THE AUDIENCE AND BROUGHT SOME TO THEIR KNEES. -„LIARS!" SOMEONE IN THE CROWD SUDDENLY SPOKE UP. HE SPREAD OUT. A BURLY MAN IN A SUIT WITH A BOW TIE STOOD THERE. THEY RECOGNIZED EACH OTHER IMMEDIATELY. IT WAS ANATOLY.

HE USED TO TAKE BETS ON THE FINGER GAME HERE. THIS IS A HISTORY THAT GOES BACK SEVERAL DECADES. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FLIGHT, HE APPROACHED THE JOURNALIST, GRABBED HIS HAND AND RAISED IT IN THE AIR IN FRONT OF EVERYONE SO THAT IT COULD BE SEEN CLEARLY. -„I ASK AGAIN, WHERE DID YOU LOSE THAT FINGER? BALTHAZAR WAS SILENT. -„WHERE?!" -„WHEN FISHING..."-„DON'T LIE!" -„I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYTHING WRONG WITH THAT FINGER OF YOURS!" IVANYA SPOKE ANGRILY. BARTENDER ILYA APPROACHED THE MAN, SUGGESTING THAT HE LEAVE THE ROOM IMMEDIATELY, AS TWO MORE MEN EMERGED FROM THE CROWD. MR. ANATOLIA'S GORILLAS. -„I MUST ASK YOU ALL TO LEAVE THE ROOM IMMEDIATELY. FROM NOW ON, THE INTERROGATION OF THE SECRET POLICE OF ABKHAZIA IS TAKING PLACE HERE," ANATOLY SAID INTO THE TENSE SILENCE AND PULLED OUT HIS ID CARD FROM HIS JACKET. THE GUESTS WERE FORCED TO LEAVE. -„LADIES TOO," HE CAST A PECULIAR LOOK AT IVANYA AS WELL. ONLY THE BARTENDER ILYA, BALTAZAR AND THREE MEN FROM THE SECRET POLICE REMAINED THERE, ONE OF THEM ANATOLY, BALTAZAR'S OLD NEMESIS. -„IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, HE LOCKED HIM IN YOUR DOOR, FOR NOT PAYING YOUR DEBT," SAID TOLJA MONOTONOUSLY. BALTHAZAR WAS SILENT. -„ BUT THAT IS NOT THE

MAIN REASON WHY WE ARE HERE. WE NEED MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THAT ENGAGING SPEECH YOU GAVE HERE A WHILE AGO." -„I CAN'T TELL YOU THAT. WAIT FOR THE ARTICLE," BALTAZAR PROTESTED. -„UNFORTUNATELY, WE CANNOT DO THAT. WE HAVE TO KNOW BEFORE THE CITIZENS WHAT IT IS ABOUT, SO THAT WE CAN BE PREPARED FOR POSSIBLE COUNTERMEASURES." -„LEAVE HIM ALONE! HE IS A RESPECTED CITIZEN!" ILYA STOOD UP FOR HIM. -„SIR, PLEASE GO OUT OF THE LOUNGE, WE NEED TO TALK HERE AS DISCREETLY AS POSSIBLE," REPLIED ANATOLY, AND HIS MEN LED THE BARTENDER OUT OF THE ROOM. ONLY FOUR MEN REMAINED. BALTAZAR WAS FORCED TO SIT AT A TABLE, TO WHICH THEY ATTACHED HIS RIGHT HAND AND OPENED ALL HIS FINGERS, INCLUDING THE ONE HE WAS MISSING - THE RING FINGER. ONE OF THE CRONIES PULLED OUT HIS KNIFE AND STARTED FENCING WITH IT BETWEEN THEM. BALTHAZAR WAS COLD. YOU COULD SEE IN HIS FACE THAT HE WAS NOT GOING TO BE EASILY THROWN BY SOMETHING. HE WANTED TO SIMPLY STAND UP, BUT THE OTHER BUDDY HELD HIM ON THE CHAIR WITH HIS PALM ON HIS SHOULDERS. -„SO WHAT ABOUT OLD JIREK?" ANATOLY ASKED MOCKINGLY. -„HOW IS THE SAMARITAN WHO PAID THE DEBT HERE FOR YOU DOING?"

-„GORLIN SYNDROME - DYING," BALTHAZAR SIGHED

WITH LOWERED EYELIDS REMEMBERING THE OLD MAN WHO NEVER CALLED HIM ANYTHING OTHER THAN THE NAME OF THE DEMON BAAL. ANATOLY ONLY NODDED HIS HEAD. -,,IT HAPPENS TO ALL OF US ONE DAY. NOW RUN WHAT ARTICLE YOU WROTE THERE, ABOUT WHAT?" IN THE SILENCE, THE TIP OF THE KNIFE BEGAN TO FALL RHYTHMICALLY INTO THE GAPS BETWEEN THE FINGERS OF BALTHAZAR'S RIGHT PALM. HE CLIMBED OUT OF THE POTTY. THE PAID TAXI DRIVER SHIFTED INTO GEAR AND DROVE OFF. HE DISAPPEARED INTO THE MIST OF THE MOUNTAINS FROM WHICH THEY EMERGED. BALTHAZAR NOW STOOD ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY WHERE A STRANGE WAR WAS RAGING. SOME CONSIDERED IT CIVIL, OTHERS CONSIDERED IT GUERRILLA, I.E. PARTISAN. HE MADE HIS WAY TOWARDS THE CRUMBLING BUILDINGS THAT GREETED HIM FROM A DISTANCE IN THE FOG. AFTER A FEW TENS OF METERS, HE EVEN HEARD THE FIRST SHOTS. HE TOOK COVER BY BRICK WALLS AND CROUCHED BY CONCRETE BARRIERS. THEY WERE GOOD PROTECTION FOR HIM UNTIL A MAN WITH A GUN PEEKED OUT FROM BEHIND ONE. BALTAZAR WAS SCARED TO DEATH. HE RAISED HIS HANDS ABOVE HIS HEAD AND BEGAN TO RECITE HIS LEARNED LINE OF BEING UNARMED. THE MAN WITH THE WEAPON, AN ORDINARY MILITARY RIFLE, SIZED HIM UP AND THEN LOWERED THE WEAPON'S FRONT

SIGHT TO BALTHAZAR'S FEET. HE DIDN'T LOOK VERY TRUSTWORTHY. BALTHAZAR SENSED A STRONG INSECURITY IN HIM, AS WELL AS CALCULATION.
HE STOOD MOTIONLESS UNTIL THE MAN GESTURED FOR HIM TO GO AROUND THE CONCRETE BARRIER. HE DID SO. AFTER THAT HE WANTED HIM TO COME CLOSER, HE PROBABLY WANTED TO SEE IF HE REALLY HAD ANYTHING ON HIM. BALTHAZAR DIDN'T LIKE THAT. HE RAISED HIS RIFLE IN THE AIR, WHICH FIRED AUTOMATICALLY AND ELBOWED THE ASSAILANT IN THE FACE. THE MAN SLUMPED TO THE GROUND AND LOST HIS BEARINGS. BALTAZAR IMMEDIATELY TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS AND STARTED SPRINTING TOWARDS THE NEAREST BUILDING OPPOSITE, HIDDEN IN THE FOG. HE HEARD CURSES BEHIND HIM AND SEVERAL SHOTS FROM A RIFLE THAT FOLLOWED HIM ALONG WITH THE GUNMAN'S QUICK STEPS. THE BUILDING WAS HALF DESTROYED. HE CLIMBED OVER THE BRICK RUBBLE AND MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE MISSING DOOR FRAME TO THE NEXT STREET. HE HEARD THE VOICES OF SEVERAL MEN AND LOOKED BACK TO HIS LEFT. HE SAW THE SILHOUETTES OF A GROUP, PROBABLY COMMANDOS. SHE WAS IN ROBUST PROTECTIVE SUITS WITH HEAVY WEAPONS. HE QUICKLY HID BEHIND A CONCRETE BLOCK AND PRAYED HE WASN'T NOTICED. A FEW SECONDS LATER, A MAN WITH A RIFLE APPEARED IN HIS

FOOTSTEPS, CHASING HIM. HE RECOGNIZED IT BY THE WAY HE WALKED AND THE VOICE HE SHOUTED WHEN THE COMMANDOS SPOTTED HIM AND STARTED SHOOTING AT HIM. THE MAN DID NOT HAVE TIME TO FIRE EVEN ONCE. SCORES OF BULLETS FROM MACHINE GUNS AND HEAVY MACHINE GUNS PIERCED HIM LIKE A SLICE OF CHEESE. TORN, HE FELL TO THE GROUND. BLOOD FROM HIS WOUNDS SPREAD ACROSS THE DIRTY GROUND IN A CIRCULAR PUDDLE. THE COMMANDO WAS APPROACHING. BALTAZAR SLIPPED THROUGH A HOLE IN THE WALL INTO ANOTHER BUILDING. HE MENTALLY CURSED HIMSELF THAT THIS SUICIDE MISSION WAS QUITE POSSIBLY HIS LAST. SUDDENLY HE HEARD MUFFLED MUMBLING BEHIND HIM. HE LOOKED BACK. THE CHARACTER OF ONE COMMANDO MEMBER AIMED HIS LASER-TARGETED MACHINE GUN AT HIM AND GAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE REST OF THE TEAM WITH HIS HAND GESTURES. BALTAZAR MADE A FRANTIC DASH ACROSS THE RUBBLE AND BROKEN BRICKS, OR OTHER REMNANTS OF HOUSE INTERIORS, SUCH AS FURNITURE OR HOUSEHOLD ACCESSORIES. BULLETS BEHIND HIM WHIZZED PAST HIS BODY, HITTING OBJECTS AROUND HIS ESCAPE ROUTE. HE BREATHED SO DEEPLY THAT HIS DIAPHRAGM HURT AND THE COLD AIR CUT INTO HIS THROAT FROM THE INSIDE. HE WOULD NEED TO BREATHE. HE STUMBLED UNHAPPILY AND SWAYED. HIS

INSTEP HIT A LARGER PIECE OF BRICK HELD TOGETHER BY CONCRETE AND HE ROLLED FORWARD INTO THE CAULDRON. HE WAS JUST WAITING FOR THE ROLLING FALL OF THE RUBBLE MINE, IN WHICH THE ROOF AND PART OF THE FLOOR OF THE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING WAS HIDDEN. HE USED HIS FINGERLESS PALMS TO PROTECT HIS HEAD AND FACE FROM SHARP CORNERS OR PIECES OF PROTRUDING IRON. THE IMPACT WAS RESONANT. IT WAS SOMETHING HARD AND METALLIC. HIS WHOLE BODY ACHED AND HE FELT VERY DIZZY. HE LOOKED UP AT WHAT HE HAD HIT AND HIS BREATH CAUGHT. IT WAS SOME KIND OF MACHINE. METALLIC AND STRONG. ON A GEAR BALL WITH THE HUMAN PROPORTIONS OF THE BRAVEST WARRIOR, HE HAD CANNONS INSTEAD OF HANDS. ONE POINTED AT HIM. HIS VISION SHARPENED AS HE STARED STRAIGHT INTO THE MAW OF THE STEEL BEAST. A LITTLE HIGHER, ABOVE THE PROTECTIVE PLATES LIKE A COLLAR AROUND THE NECK, A METAL BUSHY HEAD WITH EMERALD GLOWING EYES PEERED OUT. THE ENTIRE EPIC CREATION WAS DESCRIBED IN SCRIBBLES UNKNOWN TO HIM. HE WAS ALREADY SAYING GOODBYE TO HIS LIFE INSIDE WHEN A SHOT RANG OUT FROM ABOVE. THE FIRST MEMBERS OF THE COMMANDOS RAN TO THE TOP OF THE RUBBLE FROM WHERE HE FELL, CHASING HIM AND FINALLY CHOOSING AN UNSEEN AUTOMATON AS

THEIR FIRST TARGET OF ATTACK. BULLETS LODGED IN HIS METAL-COLD BODY, SMOKING HUNGRILY FROM THE HOLES. THE ROBOT MOVED ITS CANNON UP FROM BALTHAZAR'S HEAD AT THE ATTACKERS WHO SHOUTED SOMETHING AND COUNTERED THE ATTACK WITH ITS OWN MEASURE.

FROM BOTH OF HIS HAND CANNONS, THEY FIRST SPUN AND THEN FLEW OUT CLUSTERS OF AMMUNITION THAT SEEMED MORE CRUSHING THAN HUMAN. THIS IS ALSO WHAT THE BODIES OF THE DEAD MEMBERS OF THE COMMANDO LOOKED LIKE. A SINGLE HIT MADE A HOLE IN THE BODY THE SIZE OF A GOLF BALL, DESPITE THE REINFORCED ARMOR. HALF THE COMMANDOS WERE DEAD BEFORE THEIR REMAINS HIT THE GROUND. WITH THE LAST OF HIS STRENGTH, BALTAZAR CRAWLED AWAY FROM THE AUTOMATON BEHIND HIM AND LET THEM HANDLE THE WHOLE SITUATION WITHOUT HIS HELP. OUT OF NOWHERE HE FOUND HIMSELF ON A STREET THAT STILL SEEMED UNTOUCHED BY THE WAR. A FEW BUILDINGS BEHIND EACH OTHER APPEARED TO BE INTACT. HE PROBABLY HAD SOMETHING SERIOUS FROM HIS RIGHT LEG BELOW THE ANKLE, BUT HE STILL MAINTAINED HIS SPEED EVEN AT THE COST OF GREAT PAIN. HE ONLY HAD TO THINK ABOUT WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN LEFT OF HIS HEAD IF THOSE COMBATANTS HAD NOT APPEARED THERE. HE LIMPED DOWN THE

STREET LIKE THIS FOR SEVERAL MINUTES, OBLIVIOUS TO THE SOUNDS OF EXPLOSIONS AND GUNFIRE IN THE CITY AROUND HIM, UNTIL A DOOR OPENED. HE STOPPED WITH HIS MOUTH OPEN, WAITING TO SEE WHO OR WHAT WOULD COME OUT. FINALLY, TWO OLD MEN IN COLORFUL COSTUMES AND YARMULKES APPEARED FROM BEHIND THEM. THEY BECKONED HIM TO THEM WITH THEIR GESTURES. UP CLOSE, HE RECOGNIZED THAT THEY WERE ASHKENAZI JEWS.

THEY WERE HIDING IN THAT HOUSE. SEVERAL FAMILIES AT ONCE. THE WHOLE STREET WAS LIKE THAT. IT WAS SCENTED WITH MYRTLE. FIRST THEY INVITED HIM TO TEA. THEY LOOKED QUITE CONFUSED BY HIM. FIRST THEY ASKED HIM IF HE WAS FROM THE CITY AND HE TOLD THEM ALL ABOUT HIMSELF. THIS CONFUSED THEM EVEN MORE. -„THEY SAY IN THE WORLD THAT THERE IS A WAR HERE," HE SAID. -„YES, HE IS HERE. RUSSIA HAS ITS SOLDIERS HERE. CITIZENS ALSO HAVE WEAPONS, BUT THEY DON'T PROTECT THEMSELVES MUCH," SAID ONE OF THE JEWS. -„I HAVE SOMETHING WITH MY LEG, I NEED TREATMENT," BALTAZAR POINTED OUT ABOUT HIS INJURY. THE JEWS IMMEDIATELY TOOK HIM AND BOUND HIS LEG. HE REALLY HAD IT BROKEN. -„AREN'T YOU AFRAID THAT THEY WILL FIND YOU HERE? HE ASKED. -„THE DOOR HAS A BOLT. IF SOMEONE WANTS

TO GET IN, WE KNOW ABOUT IT IMMEDIATELY, AND UNDER THE BASEMENT WE HAVE A SECRET PASSAGE TO THE CITY PALACE, WHERE OTHERS OF US ARE ALSO HIDING. WE WILL MOVE THERE IN TIME," THE OLD JEW EXPLAINED TO HIM. -,,ON THE WAY I CAME ACROSS SOME CREATURE MADE OF METAL. DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE?" BALTAZAR ASKED AGAIN. THE JEWS LOOKED AT EACH OTHER, THEY STARTED SPEAKING SOME HEBREW AND IT SOUNDED LIKE THEY WERE ARGUING. FINALLY, ONE TURNED BACK TO THE JOURNALIST, WHO CAME WITH THE PROMISE THAT THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON HERE. -,,THESE ARE LIVING MACHINES, AUTOMATA. THEY APPEARED HERE WITH THE ADVENT OF WAR," THE OLD JEW ANSWERED HIM.

BALTHAZAR SPENT SEVERAL WEEKS HERE IN A HOUSE IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR CITY UNTIL HE COULD AT LEAST PARTIALLY WALK. HE GRADUALLY INTERVIEWED THE ENTIRE STAFF OF THE HOUSE. THERE WERE ALSO YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN. EVERYONE GRADUALLY TOLD HIM THEIR STORY OR INFORMATION ABOUT THE WAR HERE IN CRIMEA. HE LEARNED THAT THE MACHINES WERE FORETOLD BY SOME PROPHECY. THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO COME TO THE AID OF THE LOCAL JEWS IN TIMES OF GREATEST NEED, AS THE FIRST

SETTLEMENT WAS MADE HERE BY THE JEWS. THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE OF KABBALISTIC ORIGIN, UNFORTUNATELY NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO TREAT THEM. LEGEND HAS IT THAT THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO PROTECT THE JEWS AND EXPEL THE ENEMIES OF THE FAITH. HOWEVER, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PROVE WHETHER THIS IS THE CASE. NO ONE IS BRAVE ENOUGH TO FIND OUT. HE SAID HE WAS LUCKY THE MACHINE DIDN'T BLOW HIS HEAD OFF. EVERYONE IS AFRAID OF THEM. THEY HAD YET TO SEE ANYONE MANAGE TO DESTROY ONE OF THOSE MACHINES. IT IS SAID THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON WHO UNDERSTANDS THIS AT LEAST A LITTLE. RABBI ABSOLON. HE LIVES IN THE CITY PALACE, WHERE SECRET PASSAGES UNDER THE CITY LEAD. WHEN THE TIME COMES AND BALTAZAR CAN LEAVE, THE WHOLE HOUSE WILL BE MOVED THERE. NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY ARE RUNNING OUT OF FOOD SUPPLIES, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT IS SAFER THERE. UNTIL THEN, A YOUNG RUSSIAN WOMAN FROM SOMEWHERE IN THE URALS TOOK CARE OF HIM. HER NAME WAS ZOYA AND SHE WAS ONLY A FEW YEARS YOUNGER THAN THE JOURNALIST BALTAZAR. -„YOU LIKE STORIES, DON'T YOU? SHE ASKED HIM AS HE WAS WRITING SOMETHING IN HIS PAD. HE LOOKED UP AT HER REPROACHFULLY FROM THE PAPERS AND MOVED IT BACK TO THE PAD AGAIN. ZOYA WAS SLIGHTLY AMUSED.

-„I WOULD LIKE TO MENTION TO SOMEONE LIKE YOU ABOUT SEVERAL THINGS THAT ARE HAPPENING HERE IN THE URALS. THE WORLD SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IT. THEY ARE THE MAIN REASONS WHY I LEFT THERE," SHE DID NOT LET HERSELF BE DISCOURAGED. BALTAZAR SENSED THAT IT WAS LIKELY TO BE A TRAP, BUT HE PRICKED UP HIS EARS ANYWAY. -„HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF DATLA'S EXPEDITION?" "UNFORTUNATELY," HE REPLIED. -„IN THE 1960S, AROUND TEN MEMBERS OF A SPORTS SKI TEAM WENT TO ONE MOUNTAIN IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE URAL MOUNTAINS CALLED CHOLAT SYACHYL. IT IS ONLY ABOUT A THOUSAND AND A FEW TENS OF METERS HIGH, YET THAT SAME NIGHT ONLY ONE MEMBER OF THE TOURIST GROUP RETURNED ALIVE AND WELL. HE INSISTED THAT THERE THEY MUST FIND THE REMAINING MEMBERS WHO WENT WITH HIM TO THE MOUNTAINS. AFTER A FEW DAYS THEY WERE FOUND DEAD TOGETHER. THEIR LIMBS WERE SEVERED AND THEIR SKULLS WERE CRUSHED," ZOYA HAD TO DRINK HER TEA TO CONTINUE AGAIN. "THERE WERE ALSO SIGNS OF RADIATION," SHE ADDED. -„IT IS A MYSTERY TO EVERYONE IN RUSSIA. PEOPLE COME UP WITH ALL KINDS OF VARIANTS, WHAT OR WHO COULD HAVE MAIMED THEM LIKE THIS," SHE LOOKED AT BALTAZAR, WHO WAS WRITING EVERYTHING DOWN IN HIS NOTEBOOK. HE THEN RAISED HIS HEAD. -„ZOYA, HOW

DID YOU SAY THE NAME OF THAT MOUNTAIN?" -„CHOLAT SJACHYL, MOUNTAIN OF THE DEAD," SHE REPEATED AND ADDED WITH A TRANSLATION, THEN SHE SWALLOWED DRYLY AND PREFERRED TO DRINK TEA AGAIN. IT DIDN'T EVEN BUDGE WITH BALTHAZAR. HE FINISHED HIS NOTES AND PLACED THE PAD NEXT TO HIM SO HE COULD DRINK HIS TEA AS WELL. -„VERY INTERESTING BRAT ZOYA," HE SAID, AND IT WAS CLEAR THAT HE WAS POKING YOUNG RUSSIA ON PURPOSE. -„TELL ME, YOU RUSSIAN COMMANDOS WHO ARE FIGHTING HERE IN THE CRIMEA. WHAT ARE THEY AFTER?" -„HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO KNOW, MR. BALTAZAR? I'M JUST A URAL WOMAN, NOT A MEMBER OF THE MILITARY," ZOYA COUNTERED. -„DON'T GET UPSET ZOYA. USE YOUR FEMININE INTUITION, WHICH NEVER FAILS," HE MOTIVATED HER. -„IF I SHOULD ACT FOR MYSELF, THEN FOR THE TERRITORY," SHE FINALLY GAVE THE REASON FOR ALL THIS. -„I HAVE ONE MORE QUESTION ZOYA," ASKED THE JOURNALIST. -„YES?" -„WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY FROM THE URALS?" ZOYA SIGHED. -„I COME FROM THE CITY OF CHELYABINSK, LOCATED IN THE LAKE BASIN. WE HAVE A LARGE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LAKES AND TRIBUTARIES, BUT FROM ONE OF THEM COMES TERROR," SHE LOWERED HER EYES. -„TELL ME MORE," BALTAZAR TORTURED HER INTERNALLY. "THERE IS A LAKE," SHE PAUSED. -„HIS

NAME IS KARACHAY. IT HAS BEEN USED AS A RADIOACTIVE WASTE DUMP FOR SEVERAL YEARSDECADE." -„I KNOW WHERE YOU ARE GOING WITH THIS," BALTAZAR STOPPED HER. ZOYA STARTED CRYING AND THE JOURNALIST HANDED HER A TISSUE TO WIPE HER EYES. -„A VARIETY OF SPECTACLES TAKE PLACE ABOVE THAT LAKE. IT'S HARD TO EXPLAIN. LIKE IT HAS ITS OWN AURORA BOREALIS OR WHATEVER IT'S CALLED. I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, AFTER ALL, AS DO MOST OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE. HOWEVER, FROM THE TALL BUILDINGS THERE IS ALWAYS SOMETHING TO SEE IN THE SKY ABOVE THAT CURSED LAKE ON CLEAR NIGHTS. AS A CHILD, WE ALWAYS GATHERED ON THE ROOF OF OUR BLOCK OF FLATS AND WATCHED IT THROUGH GRANDPA'S BINOCULARS. BUT ONE OF MY FRIENDS WENT THERE DESPITE CLEAR WARNINGS AND NEVER CAME BACK," SHE CRIED AGAIN. -„A FEW MONTHS AFTER THAT, I MET A HUNTER AT THE MARKET IN THE CITY, WHO SUPPOSEDLY LIVES NEAR THAT AREA. IT IS SAID THAT NATURE THERE CHANGES BEFORE YOUR EYES. LIVING THINGS GROW MOSS AND FUNGI, AND PLANTS SUCH AS TREES ALSO GROW VARIOUS ORGANIC GROWTHS. BACK THEN, THE MAN WAS SELLING HUNTING KNIVES AND FURS THERE. HE WAS SHOWING ME ONE, IT WAS A FOX SKIN AND IT WAS INDEED COVERED IN SOME KIND OF FUNGUS THAT I HAD NEVER SEEN

BEFORE. HE CLAIMED IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENED THERE. THAT LAKE SCARED EVERYONE WHO KNEW ABOUT IT. IT SCARED ME TO DEATH THEN. I HAD TO GO. UNFORTUNATELY, I DIDN'T HELP MYSELF MUCH," SHE CRIED AGAIN. -„IT WILL BE FINE AGAIN, DON'T WORRY ZOYA," BALTAZAR COMFORTED HER AND SQUEEZED HER SHOULDER TIGHTLY. ZOYA WIPED HER EYES AND THEN SHIFTED HER GAZE TO HIS HANDS. -„CAN I ALSO ASK YOU SOMETHING?" -„YES, SURE." -„HOW DID YOU LOSE YOUR FINGERS? -„DO YOU KNOW THE FINGER GAME? THE ONE WITH THE KNIFE?" -„YES," AGREED ZOYA. -„LIKE THIS," HE EXAMINED HIS LEFT HAND WITH THE MISSING PINKY AND MIDDLE FINGER. -„AND ON THE RIGHT? SHE ASKED ZOYA STRANGELY. BALTHAZAR SENSED IT IN HER VOICE. SHE KNEW VERY WELL THAT HE WAS RIGHT-HANDED. -„I LOST THAT RING FINGER AT THE SAW," HE ANSWERED BRIEFLY, DESPITE THE FACT THAT INSIDE HE FELT THAT HE HAD LIED.

BY THE END OF THE MONTH, BALTAZAR COULD WALK AGAIN. THE MORNING HOURS CAME WHEN SOMEONE WITH REALLY GREAT COURAGE TRIED TO GET INSIDE THE HOUSE. LIKE A BATTERING RAM, IT KEPT HITTING THE DOOR FROM THE OUTSIDE. THE ENTIRE HOUSE, SEVERAL FAMILIES, IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO EVACUATE TO THE UNDERGROUND PASSAGES LEADING UNDER THE

CITY. NO ONE ASKED WHETHER IT WAS A MACHINE OR A COMMANDO. WITH TORCHES OR FLASHLIGHTS, THEY ARRIVED AFTER SEVERAL TENS OF MINUTES AT THE UNDERGROUND GATES TO THE PALACE. THEY OPENED AFTER SOME TIME. HE WAS ALSO AN OLD MAN WITH A BUNCH OF KEYS AND IN A ROBE. THEY WALKED UP AN OLD DIRT STAIRCASE TO THE UPPER FLOORS OF THE PALACE, WHERE MANY PEOPLE HAD GATHERED. PERHAPS A TENTH OF THE CITY. THE PALACE WAS DISPLAYED ON A SMALL HILL ABOVE THE CITY. FROM BOTH WINGS AND FROM THE CENTRAL BUILDING, THE WHOLE CITY WAS VISIBLE IN A HAZE OF SMOKE, FIRE AND EXPLOSIONS. THE SOUNDS OF GUNFIRE ECHOED OFF THE COLORFUL AND ARTISTICALLY WROUGHT WINDOWS. RABBI ABSOLŌN SPENT HIS TIME ONLY IN THE LIBRARY. HE READ THE TORAH HERE WITH OTHER JEWS. BALTAZAR ALSO CAME TO VISIT HIM. HE WAS THE OLDEST AND ALSO THE WISEST MAN IN TOWN. BUT HE WAS ALSO MYSTERIOUS. HE LET ANYONE FROM THE CITY LIVE IN HIS PALACE, BE IT A JEW OR A LATER IMMIGRANT. NOT EVEN BALTHAZAR HIMSELF BOTHERED HIM, DESPITE THE FACT THAT HERE AMONG DAVID'S NINE-POINTED STARS AND SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLESTICKS HIS OWN THOUGHTS OVERTOOK HIM. IS HIS JOB REALLY WHAT HE NEEDS IN HIS LIFE? IT SEEMED THAT HE HAD, ALTHOUGH HE WAS CURRENTLY

IN A POSITION WHERE HE DOUBTED IT QUITE A BIT. HE PROBABLY NEEDED TO EXPERIENCE THE EDGE OF HIS POSSIBILITIES TO REALIZE THAT THIS WOULD MOST LIKELY BE HIS LAST TRIP IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH. OF COURSE, IF IT SURVIVES.

THE SITUATION WAS TENSE. FOR THE THIRD MONTH HERE, HE LISTENED TO THE STORIES OF PEOPLE WHO MIRACULOUSLY FOUND THEMSELVES ON THE CARPETS OF THE PALACE, WHERE NO ONE ARMED FROM THE CITY DARED TO GO. THERE WAS GOING TO BE A GRAND FINALE, BUT NO ONE HAD THE SLIGHTEST IDEA ABOUT IT YET. ONE DAY, RABBI ABSOLÓN INVITED ALL WHO LIVED WITH HIM IN THE PALACE TO A SITUATION IN HIS HUGE LIBRARY, WHERE HE DEVOTED HIS LIFE TO TEACHING AND RECITING THE TORAH. AS BALTAZAR UNDERSTOOD FROM HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH THE JEWS, THE RABBI WAS A TRUE KABBALIST. HE DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO IT. NOW HE WAS STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF A CROWD OF PEOPLE WHO WERE SQUEEZING FROM HIM TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE LIBRARY. -„WELCOME HERE MY DEAR!" HE GREETED. -„I WOULD LIKE TO CLARIFY CERTAIN THINGS TO ALL OF YOU, WHICH WE CAN ASK GOD FOR AN EXPLANATION HERE. THIS," HE PULLED BACK THE CURTAIN THROWN OVER SOME OBJECT THAT SUDDENLY TURNED OUT TO BE

THE MOST TERRIFYING OF ALL THAT ANYONE IN THE ROOM COULD IMAGINE. IT WAS THE CHAINED MACHINE THAT WAS KILLING PEOPLE OUTSIDE. HE JUST DIDN'T MOVE. -,,THIS INSTRUMENT OF DESTRUCTION, THIS MA'ASE BERESHIT, IMITATIO DEI, THE WORK OF GOD," THE OLD RABBI CONCLUDED. MOST OF THE HALL GASPED. -,,THIS CABALISTIC MACHINE, IMITATIO DEI - GOD'S WORK AND HIS DESTINY, COMES FROM A TRADITION THAT IS PASSED DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION. AS WELL AS OUR MYSTICISM, OUR KABBALAH AND OUR TORAH. WE CAN THANK GERSHON SCHOLEM FOR ALL THIS, WHO SAW KABBALAH AS A SCIENCE. SEE THOSE CABALISTIC SYMBOLS ON THE METAL OF THAT MACHINE? THEY ARE THE LETTERS OF THE KABBALAH. EACH LETTER OF THE KABBALAH ALSO REPRESENTS A NUMBER. THEREFORE, WHAT IS WRITTEN ON THAT MACHINE IS BOTH AN INCANTATION FORMULA AND AN ALGORITHM. ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO DAHLIA, MY SCHOLAR, WHO WAS DEVOTED TO THE SO-CALLED MA'ASE MERKAVA, THE DESCENT INTO THE CHARIOT," THE OLD RABBI EXPLAINED, AS THE WOMAN TOOK A TURKISH SEAT UP THE STAIRS ONTO THE RED CARPET. SHE ASSUMED THE RIGID POSITION OF A MEDITATOR. ONLY NOW DID BALTAZAR NOTICE THE IMAGE ON THE SCROLL HANGING ABOVE THEIR HEADS. IT DEPICTED A FIGURE IN A MEDITATING POSITION

WITH THE POINTS OF THE SEPHIROTH SPELLED OUT. FROM THE ANKLES ALONG THE SPINE UP TO THE TOP OF THE HEAD. BALTAZAR COULD FEEL THE PERMUTATIONS GOING ON INSIDE HER HEAD, A WORD HE HAD PICKED UP HERE WITHIN THE CASTLE WALLS. IN KABBALISTIC PARLANCE IT MEANT REARRANGING WORDS. -„THIS WOMAN HAS UNDERGONE VERY STRICT TRAINING. IF THIS MACHINE COMES TO LIFE, IT CAN BE UNMANNERLY, UNWIELDY AND DEADLY. HOWEVER, IF THE MEDITATOR, THE JORDEJ MERKAVA, ESTABLISHES A CONNECTION WITH THE MACHINE BY OPENING HER SEPHIRS, SHE CAN CONTROL IT," HE ADDED. -„ MALKUT! NUMBER. JESOD! MASS. THROW! DURATION. TIFERET! RATE. GEBURAH! PLACE. BINAH! PASSION. KETHER! TO BE," THE LAST OF THE SEPHIROTH FINISHED, AND AT THAT MOMENT THE GOLEM'S EMERALD EYES LIT UP AND THE ENTIRE CROWD WAS STARTLED. PEOPLE SLOWLY BEGAN TO PANIC. -„DO NOT WORRY! WE HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THIS CREATURE. LOOK!" THE RABBI CALLED OUT AND THE MACHINE STARTED MOVING. HE DROVE BACK AND FORTH ALONG HIS TRACK, WHICH WAS ABOUT TWO TO THREE METERS LONG. -„HE CONTROLS ALL THE MOVEMENT OF THIS ANIMATED MACHINEOUR DA'ATH - WISDOM. NOW WE WILL SEND OUR AUTOMATON OUT INTO THE URBAN CHAOS," ANNOUNCED THE RABBI. THE

MACHINE MOVED TOWARDS THE CROWD AND THEY PARTED WITH A STARTLED NOISE. HE THEN WALKED OUT OF THE LIBRARY AND INTO THE ANTECHAMBER, WHERE TWO OTHER MEN ALREADY HAD THE PALACE DOOR OPEN. THE MACHINE PULLED OUT AND SLOWLY DISAPPEARED ACROSS THE LONG GRASSY LOT TO THE GATE, WHICH WAS NOW ALSO MANNED BY TWO MEN. THE AUTOMATON PASSED HER AND THEN RACED DOWN THE GENTLE HILL TO THE URBAN BATTLEFIELD. "WAIT FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR SCHOLAR DAHLIA HERE IN THE EVENING," CONCLUDED THE RABBI. SO IN THE EVENING ALL THOSE WHO FELT SUFFICIENTLY CONVINCED OF THE CABALISTIC POWER OF CONSCIOUSNESS GATHERED. -„THE MACHINE THAT DAHLIA USED ALL DAY WITH HER MIND POWER DROVE THE RUSSIAN SOLDIERS BACK FROM WHERE THEY CAME FROM!" THE RABBI CALLED OUT AND THE CROWD BELOW HIM BEGAN TO CHEER. THAT NIGHT THE WARFARE IN THE CITY REALLY STOPPED. ON THE SECOND DAY, THE FIRST GROUP OF PEOPLE LEFT THE CASTLE, AND THE NEXT DAY ANOTHER GROUP LEFT. IN THE END, BALTAZAR ALSO LEFT THE CASTLE AND WENT THROUGH THE CITY, WHICH SLOWLY BEGAN TO BE RESTORED TO ITS ORIGINAL FORM, WHERE HE HAD BEEN THROWN OUT BY THE OLD WOMAN. IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE THE SAME GUY SHOWED UP IN A CAR. BALTHAZAR PAID

HIM TO BRING HIM BACK TO THE MAINLAND FROM THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA.
TOLJA LOOKED SATISFIED. HE LOOKED AS IF HE HAD MESSED UP THE WHOLE STORY EVEN WITH A REEL.
-„OKAY BALTHAZAR, IT WAS LONG AND IT'S ENOUGH FOR ME EVEN THOUGH I KNOW YOU'RE A LIAR. IF ANYTHING ELSE COMES OUT IN THAT MONDAY ARTICLE, I WILL FIND YOU AND PERSONALLY CUT OFF THE REMAINING FINGERS ON YOUR RIGHT HAND TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU WILL NEVER WRITE ANYTHING ELSE," HE SMILED FOXILY IN FAREWELL. HE PUT ON HIS JACKET AND LEFT THE ROOM WITH HIS GORILLAS TO MEET THE MORNING HOURS. BALTAZAR JUST SAT THERE AND BREATHED. SUDDENLY THE BARTENDER ILJA APPEARED NEXT TO HIM WITH A GLASS OF RED WINE AND CIGARS. THAT JUST CAME IN HANDY FOR THE JOURNALIST. ON THAT MONDAY OF THE NEW WEEK, A SPECIAL WAS INDEED PUBLISHED WITH BALTAZAR'S ARTICLE RUNNING THE LENGTH OF THE ENTIRE ISSUE. EVERYTHING WAS EXACTLY THE SAME AS HIS STORY. HOWEVER, HE HIMSELF DECIDED TO HANG UP JOURNALISM AND PREFER TO FIND SOMEONE YOUNGER TO WHOM HE COULD PASS ON HIS EXPERIENCE. HE WOULD DESCRIBE THAT FEELING WITH THE ONLY WORD HE LEARNED IN THE WALLS OF THE ASHKENAZI PALACE - PERMUTATION, CHANCE.

WATERMAN

RUPRECHT TRáSNIčKA, A WATERMAN BY PROFESSION, WAS HIDDEN IN THE REEDS UNDER THE WATER AND WAITED. THE MOON WAS SHINING ON THE NIGHT SURFACE AND THE WARM SUMMER NIGHT DID NOT LET THE YOUNGSTERS SLEEP. THE GROUP WENT SWIMMING. RUPRECHT WAS CAREFUL THAT IF ONE OF THEM STARTED TO DROWN, HE WOULD IMMEDIATELY GRAB HIM AND PULL HIM DOWN BELOW THE SURFACE. THERE ARE NEVER ENOUGH SOULS. HE WATCHED THE SHAVED AND UNSHAVEN LEGS OF GIRLS AND BOYS FROM BELOW THE SURFACE, AND HE HAD TO ADMIT, WILLINGLY OR UNWILLINGLY, THAT THE FLAILING FEET THAT TREADED WATER EXCITED HIM. SUCH A GIRLY

THUMB. THAT WAS SOMETHING ORGASMIC. THE SQUEALS OF THE JUVENILES WHEN THEY JUMPED INTO THE WATER RATHER IRRITATED HIM, BUT IN A MONTH LIKE TODAY, HE PROBABLY WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SLEEP ANYWAY. HE WATCHED THE YOUNG BRUNETTE'S BUTTOCKS AND THIGHS UNDERWATER. HE RECOGNIZED IT BY THE GROWTH IN THE CROTCH. STRANGE. IT REMINDED HIM OF A FROG. THE STENCH OF MUSKRAT AS SOMEONE'S URINE SEEPED THROUGH THE LAKE WATER TO HIM AND HE SCOOPED IT UP INTO HIS GILLS. HE SQUINTED. YUCK! PEE! RIFLEMAN! THE GIRLS SCREAMED AND JUMPED INTO THE WATER. BOYS JUMPED AFTER THEM OR PUSHED THEM OFF THE PIER. ONE PRETTY BLONDE SO UNLUCKILY FELL RIGHT TO HIM. THEY STARED STRAIGHT INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES AND SHE COULDN'T EVEN CRY OUT IN FEAR. ONLY A FEW BUBBLES LEFT HER MOUTH. HE SUCKED THEM IN. THAT OXYGEN WAS DILUTED

BY THE TASTE OF BOOZE. WHAT THEY DRANK ALL NIGHT, OR AT LEAST SHE DID. WAS IT RED WINE? MAYBE SOMETHING HARDER. RUPRECHT WILL FIND OUT RIGHT AWAY. HE GRABBED HER AROUND THE BODY. HE GAVE HER A BIG HUG. HE GAVE HER A KISS. UNWANTED ON HER PART, BUT SHE STILL GOT IT. HER EYES OPENED. JUST AS HER ESOPHAGUS OPENED AND LET IN THE PULL OF SOME SORT OF CENTRIFUGE HIDDEN INSIDE RUPRECHT'S THROAT. FIRST, HE SUCKED ALL THE OXYGEN FROM HER LUNGS WITH ONE POWERFUL BREATH. THEN THE SOUL. HE FELT HER PRESS AGAINST HIS - STINKING LIKE A CARP AND LOOKING THE SAME. AND FINALLY SOME STOMACH CONTENTS. FOR A REAL IDEA OF WHAT SHE ACTUALLY ATE TODAY. PLUS, HE DIDN'T EAT MUCH, SO HE FED TWO FISH AT THE SAME TIME. SHE STILL HAD VODKA IN HER AND WAS EATING SOMETHING LIKE BACON FOR DINNER.

IT SHOULD BE OKAY. HER EYES TOOK ON A CADAVEROUS LOOK. HE DIDN'T CLOSE THEM. HE TOOK HER HAND AND PULLED HER INTO HIS DEPTHS.
TIED BY THE LEG BY SEAWEED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE LAKE. THE WATERMAN WAS SITTING NEARBY AND SCRUBBING THE SCALES OF A LARGEMOUTH BASS, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS A WHITE CARP. FINALLY, HE WAVED HIS TAIL AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE GREEN OF THE LAKE'S PLANKTON. ONLY THE SCALES REMAINED. THERE WERE ONLY A FEW OF THEM, BUT HASTMAN RUPRECHT WAS HAPPY FOR THEM, BECAUSE THE SCALES FUNCTIONED AS CURRENCY IN THE UNDERWATER WORLD. OF COURSE, IT WASN'T THE ONLY COMMODITY, THERE WERE ALSO SOULS. HUMAN SOULS, ANIMAL SOULS, SOULS OF BEINGS AND EACH HAD DIFFERENT PARAMETERS AND PRICE. BUT THE SCALES WERE THE MOST BASIC MEANS OF TRADE, BECAUSE WHEN A WATERMAN REACHED

THE REALM OF SOULS. EVERYONE KNEW HE WAS BROKE. FORTUNATELY, THE HASTMAN COMMUNITY HAD A WELL-ESTABLISHED SOLIDARITY, SO THE WATERMEN TOOK CARE OF EACH OTHER NOT ONLY COMPETITIVELY BUT ALSO VOLUNTARILY. SOULS WERE CONSIDERED THE WEALTH OF HASTRAMAN FAMILIES. RUPRECHT TRáSNIčKA HAD COUSINS ALONG THE SHORES OF LAKE šVIHAVA TRNOV. THE ORIGIN OF THE TřáSNIčK FAMILY WAS HERE, AND HE HAD A GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-AUNT, BARONESS VODNíKOVá TřáSNIčKOVá. WITH A CASTLE ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE LAKE WHERE TADPOLES WERE BORN AND FROGS CAUGHT MOSQUITOES. HE COUNTED HIS LITTLE SOULS IN THE CUPS HE HAD SET UP ON THE WALL ABOVE THE BED. HE HAD SEVEN AND TWENTY OF THEM INCLUDING THE GIRL WHO WAS JUST FLOATING NEARBY WITH SEAWEED WRAPPED AROUND HER

BEAUTIFUL ANKLE. HE WONDERED WHAT TO DO WITH HER. EITHER HE EATS IT OR HE MIGHT ENJOY IT A BIT BEFORE SERVING IT TO THE FISH. BUT HE LIKED HER. A PRETTY YOUNG BLONDE WITH BLUE EYES THAT LOOKED AT HIM SO LIFELESSLY. HE REMEMBERED THE LAST VISIT OF BARONESS TřáSNIčKOVá'S GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-AUNT. SHE CONVINCED HIM THAT IT WAS TIME TO START A FAMILY. HAVE A COUPLE OF PIKE IN THE SLED, SO THAT HE HAS SOMETHING TO DRIVE HIS LADY AROUND AND SHE SHOULD ALSO HAVE ANOTHER BED. WELL, THAT'S A FLUKE. JUST SUCH A YOUNG GIRL FLOATS TO HIM ON THAT GREEN SEAWEED. SO IT WILL PROBABLY GO TO TOWN FOR THE WATERMAN'S SOUL.

HE COUNTED HIS SCALES IN HIS POCKETS AND IT SEEMED TO BE ENOUGH. SO HE WENT TO THE CITY.

ALONG A PATH PAVED WITH STONES SMOOTHED BY WATER. A SCHOOL OF

FISH SWAM ALONG IT. CARP, BREAM, PIKE. THE WATERMAN WAS MARCHING TOWARDS THE LAKE FORTRESS, HIS WHITE AND GREENISH HAIR FLOWING BEHIND HIM. HE GRABBED A LARGE CATFISH THAT WAS SWIMMING BY BY THE TAIL FIN AND IT DRAGGED HIM ALONG FOR A GOOD DISTANCE UNTIL HE APPEARED IN FRONT OF THE EDGE OF THE LAKE TOWN. HE LET GO OF THE CATFISH AND CONTINUED COMFORTABLY. HE WENT EXACTLY WHERE HE WAS HEADED. IT WAS NOT EASY IN THE LAKE CITY. IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIND A WATERMAN'S SOUL, AND IN ADDITION, THERE WAS THE COMPLICATION THAT THE SOULS OF DEAD WATERMAN ALREADY CARRIED THE DEAD MAN'S LEGACY. RUPRECHT WANTED A NEW ONE, CLEAN AND UNUSED. IT NEEDS THE SOUL OF A PURE FISH. EITHER TROUT OR IF HE'S LUCKY, SOMETHING MORE EXOTIC. FIRST THEY TRY THE U ŽABINCE INN.

HE PAID WITH A SCALE AND GOT A TANKARD OF UREA. HE PAID TWO MORE SCALES AND BEGAN TO ASK WHETHER THE INNKEEPER ŽABINEC KNEW IF ANYONE IN TOWN HAD THE SOUL OF A TROUT, A SALMON OR SOMETHING MORE EXOTIC. HE DIDN'T ANSWER HIM HONESTLY. RUPRECHT RECOGNIZED IT IMMEDIATELY. IT WAS A KIND OF ANSWER LIKE TRY THE MOST FAMOUS HASTRAMAN WATERMEN IN THE CITY. HE KNEW WHY THAT WAS. THE LAKE BELONGED TO HIS GREAT-GREAT-AUNT, AND SHE WANTED TO COLLECT A FEE FROM ALL THE SQUATTERS FOR A PLACE TO LIVE. OF COURSE NOT FROM FAMILY MEMBERS. SO EVEN SUCH DISADVANTAGES ARE OF NOBLE BIRTH, RUPRECHT REALIZED. IF HE DID NOT PAY THE TITHE TO HIS GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-AUNT, HE PAID FOR IT ELSEWHERE. HE DRANK HIS TANKARD OF UREA AND LEFT WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE. SO HE TOOK IT FROM THE

BAR TO THE MERCHANT ACROSS THE STREET TO SEE IF HE HAD ANY OF THOSE FISH SOULS. HE HAD CARP, CLASSICALLY, WHICH COULD ALSO BE EXPECTED IN A CZECH FRESHWATER LAKE. THEN ALSO SOME PIKE, PERCH, PIKE, BUT NOTHING CLEANER THAT WOULD BE GOOD FOR THE FUTURE MRS. VODNíKOVá TRáSNIčKOVá. WITH A PROMISE THAT HE WOULD RETURN IF HE COULDN'T FIND SOMETHING BETTER ELSEWHERE, HE LEFT THE SHOP. THIS TIME HE MADE IT TO HIS WELL-KNOWN HASTROSCHER LASTUR. HE WAS SUCH A WATERMAN. THIS ONE MOVED IN DURING THE FLOODS A FEW YEARS AGO DOWN THE RIVER ELBE FROM SOMEWHERE ABROAD. HE WAS A DUDE WHO TRAVELED THE CURRENTS OF RIVERS AND SEAS. HE WAS SMILING FROM EAR TO EAR AND STILL MANAGED TO KEEP A SERIOUS FACE. THE LOOK ON HIS FACE SAID FRIENDSHIP MEANT BUSINESS TO HIM. HE HAD A GOOD

SELECTION, BUT WHAT MUST BE ADDED, WHAT THE HASTMAN REMEMBERS, HE HAD. AND EVEN MORE. FROM MUGS TO NETS TO FISH SADDLES. ALSO VARIOUS DECORATIONS SUCH AS A DIVER'S SUIT OR A SHIPWRECK, OR EVEN A MILITARY SUBMARINE. HE EVEN PROMISED TO ORDER A PIECE OF THE TITANIC IN ADVANCE, BUT IT WASN'T EXACTLY THE KIND OF THING THAT SOME ORDINARY WATERMAN WOULD NEED STUCK IN HIS MUD ON AN UNDERWATER PROPERTY. RUPRECHT IMMEDIATELY ASKED HIM ABOUT SOULS. FONOUS LASTURA BROUGHT HIM TO A ROOM LINED WITH COLLECTIBLE MUGS FROM THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES HE HAD TRAVELED TO. HE HAD THEM FULL OF THE SOULS OF FISH AND SEA CREATURES. THAT WAS BEAUTIFUL. HE GAVE HIM A CHOICE OF SOUL SALMON, TROUT, SWORDFISH, WHALE, DOLPHIN AND OTHERS. RUPRECHT THOUGHT. HE WANTED SALMON OR TROUT, BUT IT

WOULD BE A SHAME NOT TO CHOOSE SOMETHING MORE UNSIGHTLY. A SWORDSMAN WOULD BE TOO MUCH, SHE WOULD DEFINITELY BE AGGRESSIVE THEN. WITH A WHALE SOUL, SHE COULD BECOME VERY LARGE. DOLPHINS ARE ALSO VERY SMART AND THAT MIGHT NOT TURN OUT WELL EITHER. A SHARK'S SOUL WOULD SURELY MEAN EATING ALL THE FISH AND WATER CREATURES, AND THAT WOULD BE AMEN QUACK. FINALLY HE PULLED OUT THE SOUL OF AN ASIAN OCTOPUS, WITH HIS ADVICE THAT THIS WAS DEFINITELY WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR. HE AUTOMATICALLY MARKED HIM WITH A WHOLE THOUSAND SCALES. RUPRECHT WAS TAKEN ABACK, BUT FONOUS TOLD HIM THAT HAVING SUCH A WATER LADY WITH THE SOUL OF AN OCTOPUS IS A WIN NOT ONLY IN THE FIELD, AS FAR AS EXOTICS ARE CONCERNED, BUT ALSO THAT SHE CAN HANDLE SEVERAL THINGS IN THE HOUSEHOLD AT ONCE AND THAT PAYS OFF. RUPRECHT HELD

HIS CHIN. BUBBLES WERE RISING FROM HIS HEAD FROM HOW MUCH HE WAS THINKING. BUT IN THE END HE DECIDED TO MARRY HER.

ON THE WAY FROM FONOUS LASTURA, WHILE LOOKING AT THAT CERAMIC MUG, HE IMAGINED FROM THE FAR EAST WHAT A LAKE GEISHA WOULD LOOK LIKE. NOW JUST TO SAIL TO THE GREAT-GREAT-AUNT FOR THE LAST BLESSING. HE CAUGHT THE FIRST WALLEYE THAT SAILED IN THAT DIRECTION, TO TřáSNIčEK BAY, WHERE HIS GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-AUNT TřáSNIčKOVá LAKE CASTLE LIVED.

IT WAS VAST AND OVERGROWN WITH SEAWEED. THE GATE WAS GUARDED BY A GIANT DIVER, AND INSTEAD OF A SERVANT SHE HAD AN OVERGROWN CRAWFISH. GREAT-GREAT-AUNT WAS JUST FEEDING HER CAPERS. AS SOON AS SHE NOTICED RUPRECHT, SHE HUGGED HIM WITH ALL THE LOVE OF A WATERMAN. THEY CHATTED OVER

PLANKTON TEA ABOUT LIFE, HOW HER CARP WERE GROWING, AND THAT SHE HAD BOUGHT A BEAUTIFUL PEARL OYSTER. SHE WAS SHINING ON THE WHOLE CASTLE. RUPRECHT INTRODUCED HER TO HIS ROMANTIC SITUATION WITH HIS FUTURE WATER LADY AND ASKED HER IF SHE WOULD CONSECRATE HIM THE SOUL OF AN OCTOPUS. THE GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-AUNT WONDERED WHAT KIND OF EXOTIC IT WAS, AND RUPRECHT LAUGHED. FINALLY, SHE GAVE HIM HER BLESSING AND ASKED HIM TO BRING HER TO SHOW HER AFTER THE TRANSFORMATION. RUPRECHT PROMISED HER A VISIT AND SET OFF WITH A FLOCK OF BREAMS BACK TO HIS BELOVED DROWNED. HE CARESSED HER PUFFY FACE AND BLEW IT INTO HER MOUTH AND INTO HER BRONCHI AND DEEPER INTO THE OCTOPUS'S SOUL UNTIL IT FLEW TO THE RIGHT PLACE FOR THE SOUL. THE GIRL SUDDENLY REVIVED. HER EYES CAME ALIVE WITH

FEROCITY AND BULGED. RUPRECHT DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT, SO HE WAS SURPRISED WHEN ONE OF HER LIMBS, WHICH HAD MULTIPLIED TENFOLD AND TURNED INTO TENTACLES, GRABBED HIM AND WRAPPED AROUND HIM. SHE BARED HER SHARP TEETH, LIKE NEEDLES, ON HIM AND THAT WAS THE LAST THING RUPRECHT TRáSNIčKA SAW IN HIS WATERMAN'S LIFE.

FOR MR! THAT'S FOEU PAX! HIS SOUL, SHE THOUGHT, AS SHE REALIZED THAT SHE HAD RELEASED AN INVASIVE SPECIES OF MUTANT TURNIP INTO THEIR LAKE HOME, SLOWLY SWIMMING FOR THE OTHER SOULS OF THE FRESHWATER HASTMANS.

ALTERNATE ENDING

THE GIRL BULGED HER EYES AND STARED AT THE WATERMAN. IT IS HE? THE ONE WHO PULLED HER UNDER THE SURFACE AND SUCKED HER SOUL? SHE WOULD HAVE HIT HIM IF SHE HADN'T BEEN SURPRISED THAT HE HAD TENTACLES INSTEAD OF HANDS. SLIPPERY, MUSCULAR AND LONG.

-„WHAT DID YOU DO TO ME? SHE ASKED HIM PLAINTIVELY.

-„YOU WILL BE MY LAKE LADY! AREN'T YOU HAPPY? LOOK AT WHAT YOUR NEW LIFE AS A WATERMAN'S WIFE HAS TO OFFER AROUND YOU", RUPRECHT SPOKE.

-„YOUR WIFE? AND WHAT WILL MY NAME BE?" -„TRáSNIčKOVá," HE ANSWERED.

-„ANIčKA TřáSNIčKOVá", SHE SAID THE NAME OUT LOUD. SHE LOOKED LIKE SHE WOULD BE PLEASED.

-„AND WHEN WILL I HAVE A

WEDDING?"
-,,WELL, WHAT ABOUT GETTING READY FOR IT", RUPRECHT PATTED HER HEAD.
-,,THEN I'LL NEED A WEDDING DRESS, AND PROBABLY AN EXTRA-LARGE ONE, CONSIDERING , THAT I'M HALF OCTOPUS. LOOK WHERE I HAVE TENTACLES EVERYWHERE, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO LEARN HOW TO HANDLE THEM".
-,,PLEASE, WHAT KIND OF DRESS, YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL EVEN WITHOUT THEM", THE WATERMAN COOED AT HER.-,,THAT'S NOT IT! EVERYONE WANTS TO WEAR A BEAUTIFUL DRESS AT THE WEDDING, WE LOOK FORWARD TO IT ALL OUR LIVES. AND BESIDES, YOU'RE JUST ME APPROPRIATED AND MADE ME THIS!"
-,,YOUR SOUL WAS MORE THAN DEAR, I WOULD BE IN DEBT FOR GENERATIONS!" " WELL, YOU'LL HAVE TO, OTHERWISE I'LL FIND

ANOTHER WATERMAN WHO'LL BE HAPPY TO BUY THEM FOR ME", SHE COUNTERED. RUPRECHT HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TAKE HIS FUTURE WIFE TO THE CITY TO SHOP FOR WEDDING DRESSES. YOU CAN CERTAINLY IMAGINE WHAT AN UPROAR THAT WAS IT WAS WHEN THIS SEDUCTIVE SNAKE WANDERED AROUND THE CITY WITH ITS UNRELENTING TENTACLES EVERYWHERE THEY COULD REACH. THEY PULLED ON THE SHUTTERS OF BUILDINGS, THE LIMBS OF THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAKE CITY, OR TOOK VARIOUS THINGS THAT WERE AVAILABLE, FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE MARKET. THE WATERMEN BEGGED AND CURSED, WHAT KIND OF MONSTER IS SHE, SHE HAS NOTHING TO DO HERE. BUT RUPRECHT GRABBED HER BY THE SIDE AND PROUDLY LED HER TO THE LAST SHOP WHERE THEY COULD HAVE A WEDDING DRESS IN HER SIZE. THEY HAD BEAUTIFUL PIECES HERE, WITH LACE AND ALL KINDS OF COLORS. UNFORTUNATELY, BUT LUCKILY, THEY

HAD THE ONLY THING HERE THAT WOULD SUIT ANIčKA, A WATERMAN - WITH FRINGES. SHE PUT THEM ON AND WITHOUT FURTHER WAITING, RUPRECHT AGREED HOW HE WOULD PAY THEM OFF IN TIME. THEY RUSHED OUT OF THE SHOP AND HEADED STRAIGHT THROUGH THE CITY TO THE LAKE CASTLE TO GIVE RUPRECHT GREAT UNCLE MISS.

-„WELL RUPRECHT, I HAD NO IDEA THAT YOU WOULD HAVE SUCH A BEAUTY", WONDERED GREAT-GREAT-AUNT TřáSNIčKOVá, UNDERWATER NOBLEWOMAN AND BARONESS OF THE LAKE CASTLE.
-„YOU HAVE A VERY BEAUTIFUL PLACE HERE", ANčA PRAISED THE CASTLE.
-„I AM VERY PLEASED, I ALSO HAVE TO PRAISE YOU FOR YOUR DRESS, IT CORRESPONDS PERFECTLY TO OUR FAMILY TRADITION. DO YOU ALREADY

KNOW WHEN YOU WILL GET MARRIED?"

-„WELL AUNT, WE WOULD LIKE HER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE", EXPLAINED RUPRECHT.

-„AH, SO LIKE THIS. WELL, GOOD. CAPER!" GREAT-GREAT-AUNT TřáSNIčKOVá SUMMONED HER PET. SHE WRAPPED THE PARCHMENT AROUND HIS HEAD IN A PINK BOW AND STROKED HIS BACK FIN AS A SIGN OF SAILING. THE CARP FLICKED ITS TAIL A FEW TIMES AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE GREEN OF THE LAKE.

-„WELL, THE MESSENGER SENT. NOW WE CAN START PREPARING THE WEDDING HALL. DO YOU THINK, ANč, THAT MY CHAMBER CASTLE IS SUFFICIENT FOR A WEDDING OF YOUR DIMENSIONS?"

-„YES MRS. GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-AUNT", ANSWERED ANIčKA WITH UNDISGUISED MODESTY.

-,,OKAY, SO LET'S GET DOWN TO IT. YOU, RUPRECHT, WILL POLISH THE ENTIRE CASTLE NICELY BRICK BY BRICK WITH A BRUSH, AND THE BRIDE AND I WILL DECORATE THE WHOLE THING," THE NOBLEWOMAN DECIDED. AFTER SOME TIME, THE CARP RETURNED WITH THE FIRST GUESTS, THEY WERE WATERMEN FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE LEFT BRANCH OF THE FAMILY.

-,,HELLO RUPRECHT! SO WHERE'S YOUR CLAM?" HIS COUSIN RUDOLPH CALLED TO THE GROOM WITH HIS FROG GRIN. RUPRECHT RAISED HIS HEAD FROM BRUSHING THE LAST BRICKS UNDER THE ROOF OF THE CASTLE TOWER AND IMMEDIATELY KNEW WHO HIS WITNESS WOULD BE. RUDOLPH WORE A SALMON BOW TIE AND HIS WIFE A TRADITIONAL WATERMAN'S ROBE. HER SOUL WAS MADE OF A PIKE, IT WAS OBVIOUS FROM THE LOOK OF HER PROTRUDING

UPPER FRONT TEETH. SHE WAS SMILING AT EVERYONE AROUND HER.

–„TAKE IT! RUDOLPH!" COUNTESS TřáSNIčKOVá EXCLAIMED. –„ HOW I LIKE TO SEE YOU! SO HERE I PRESENT TO YOU THE BRIDE ANIčKA IN A FEW HOURS ALREADY TřáSNIčKOVA", SHE INTRODUCED HER TO THEM. BOTH RUDOLPH AND BERTA SHOOK HER TENTACLE AND LAUGHED ALL ROUND AT RUPRECHT'S BEAUTY.

–„DOESN'T IT BRING BAD LUCK WHEN THE GROOM SEES THE BRIDE ON THE WEDDING DAY BEFORE THE CEREMONY? ANNA ASKED.

–„VODNíK'S TRADITIONS ARE VERY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF HUMANS. IN OUR COUNTRY, THE CARP MUST NOT GET YOU MUDDY, OTHERWISE YOU WILL HAVE A CLOUDY HONEYMOON", EXPLAINED THE GREAT-GREAT-GREAT-AUNT. ANIčKA WAS SURPRISED, BUT INSIDE SHE FELT THAT SHE WOULD AT LEAST LIKE

SOMETHING NEW. SLOWLY SHE STARTED TO GET USED TO HER TENTACLES, WHICH SHE FINALLY UNDERSTOOD AND SO THERE WAS NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT WHERE THEY WERE ALWAYS TWISTING AND WHAT THEY WERE DOING. IN A FEW HOURS, THE WEDDING WAS FINALLY IN FULL SWING. ALL THE WATERMEN FROM THE FAMILY AND THE SURROUNDING AREA GATHERED AND TOOK THE PREPARED PLACES IN THE COURTYARD OF THE LAKE CASTLE. THE GIVER WAS THE NOBLE GREAT-GREAT-AUNT TřáSNIčKOVá HERSELF. ANNA WAS THE FIRST TO COME TO THE ALTAR. LUCKY SCALES WERE THROWN THAT WAY AND SHE HAD FULL TENTACLES OF VEIL WORK. RUPRECHT APPROACHED THE ALTAR SECOND WITH HIS BEAUTIFULLY LACED BOW AROUND HIS NECK. HE, ON THE OTHER HAND, CAUGHT THE SCALES, BECAUSE THEN THE WEDDING TRIP WAS PAID FOR. AT LAST THEY WERE ALL AT THE ALTAR.

GREAT-GREAT-AUNT TřáSNIčKOVá IN THE LEAD, RUPRECHT AND ANčA IN FRONT OF HER, AND ONE PERSON NEXT TO THEM ON EACH SIDE. AT RUPRECHT'S, HIS COUSIN RUDOLF, AND AT ANčA'S, BERTA, AS IS THE CUSTOM ACCORDING TO THE WATERMAN'S TRADITION - WHOEVER COMES FIRST TO THE WEDDING IS USUALLY THE WITNESS. AFTER MUTUAL CONSENT TO THE MARRIAGE BOND OF BOTH NEWLYWEDS, A FRINGE WAS TIED AROUND RUPRECHT'S HAND AND ANNA'S TENTACLE. NOW THEY WERE A LEGITIMATE COUPLE FROM THE TRáSNIčKI FAMILY. UNTIL THE END OF THE WEDDING, THEY FEASTED AND CELEBRATED UNTIL THE WEDDING NIGHT. THEY CRAWLED UNDER THE COVERS TOGETHER AND THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT TO DO NEXT.

-,,HOW DO AQUATIC PEOPLE MAKE BABIES ANYWAY? ANNA ASKED WITH HER TENTACLES STICKING OUT FROM

UNDER THE COVERS AND SWARMING AROUND THE BED. OH NO! RUPRECHT COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT THE DUTY OF THE FIRST WEDDING NIGHT - TO TURN LUST FOR A WOMAN INTO CHILDREN. SO HE EXPLORED THE OPENING BETWEEN HER TENTACLES AND PRAYED THAT HE HAD ENOUGH QUALITY MILK. THERE ARE ONLY TWO VARIANTS OF HOW WATERFOWL CAN HAVE CHILDREN - EITHER THEY ARE LUCKY THAT THE WATERFOWL IS A SPAWNER OR THEY HAVE TO DROWN THEM.

HELL ON EARTH

INFERNUM IN TERRA 666

IN 1666, THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON WAS RECORDED. HELL BROKE OUT THERE THEN. THE WHOLE CITY WAS BURNING AND THE PEOPLE WITH IT. IF 666 IS THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST AND THE DEVIL HIMSELF, SATAN, ANTICHRIST, OR HELL, AND 1 IS CONSIDERED THE NUMBER OF UNITY, AND 2 SIGNIFIES DUALITY, SO DOES BIPOLARITY, HEAVEN AND HELL. IN SOME CULTURES, THE NUMBER 2 IS ALSO CONSIDERED THE NUMBER FOR THE DEVIL. THE DEVIL IS ONLY SUPPOSED TO BE A REFLECTION OF GOD, HIS ALTER EGO. GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN 7 DAYS. HE RESTED ON THE 7TH. THE DEVIL WORKED FOR 5 DAYS AND ON THE 6TH HE BUILT A HOUSE, A PALACE, HIS BUILDING

OR AN ALTAR. THAT IS WHY THE NUMBER 6 BELONGS TO THE DEVIL. IF WE ARE TO GO BY HISTORY, HELL ON EARTH WILL BEGIN IN 2666. WE CAN GET AWAY FROM THE FIRE OF LONDON, AS THE BRITISH CAPITAL OF THE WORLD. THE BRITISH EMPIRE WAS SPREAD ALL OVER THE WORLD. ITS COLONIES COVERED THE LARGEST AREA OF THE WORLD LIKE NO OTHER EMPIRE. ALONG WITH GLOBAL WARMING, THERE WILL BE UNBEARABLE HEAT AND POLLUTED AIR ALL OVER THE WORLD. THE SUN WILL SHINE AND BURN THE SKIN, BECAUSE GREENHOUSE GASES HAVE ALREADY EATEN AWAY THE OZONE LAYER. ALL THE RADIOACTIVITY THAT MANKIND HAS PUT INTO THE EARTH WILL BE RETURNED TO THE SURFACE THROUGH THE CORE AND THE EARTH WILL SHINE DIRECTLY. PEOPLE WILL BE BORN INTO A LIVING HELL. FROM BIRTH, THEY WILL HAVE TUMORS, ANOMALIES ON THE BODY AND OR OTHER ABNORMALITIES. THEIR BLOOD WILL BOIL ALIVE INSIDE THEM. THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPE. THEIR SKIN WILL CRACK AND THEY WILL MAP LIKE A DRIED PIECE OF LAND. THE AIR WILL BE HOT AND INEDIBLE WITHOUT

THE MODIFICATION THAT HUMANITY WILL HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE FOR THANKS TO THIS STORY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY WHETHER AT THAT TIME THE TECHNOLOGY WILL BE SO ADVANCED THAT IT CAN PREVENT SUCH A STATE OF THE PLANET EARTH. WE CAN ONLY HOPE FOR IT AND PREVENT THE STATE OF INFERNUM IN TERRA 2666 - A GLOBAL FIRE.

THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE VERSION IN WHICH ONLY PRAGUE BURNS, IF BY THEN IT ACHIEVES THE DESIGNATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS AS THE OPPOSITE OF LONDON.

SHE WOULD SURVIVE THE FIRE AND GAIN SOMETHING THAT WOULD HELP HER IN HER NEXT LIVES.

SALAMANDER HURRIED DOWN THE STREET TO THE LOCAL MATERNITY HOSPITAL. AT LAST A CHILD WAS BORN TO HIM. HE WAS SO HAPPY ABOUT IT THAT IT BURST HIS BIG BLISTER THAT HAD BEEN SWELLING FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. IT WAS ALL FROM THE LOCAL HEAT. THE CRAZY HELLISH HEAT THAT WAS EVERYWHERE OUTSIDE. THE ONLY AT LEAST PARTIAL RESCUE WAS ANY INTERNAL OBJECT. DESPITE THE LUXURIOUS AIR CONDITIONING, ONE STILL COULDN'T PROTECT HIMSELF FROM THE RADIATION. ALTHOUGH HE WAS ABLE TO GET USED TO IT OVER GENERATIONS, IT WAS ONLY THROUGH VARIOUS MUTATIONS OF HIS BODY. DAMAGED SKIN OR VARIOUS EXTRA LIMBS AND GROWTHS, IT COULDN'T DO WITHOUT THEM. THEREFORE, PERHAPS ALL LIVING BEINGS WORE SPECIAL CLOTH CLOTHING TO HIDE THEIR DEFORMITIES. HE FINALLY REACHED THE TUNNEL ELEVATOR THROUGH THE RECEPTION DESK, WHICH WAS MANNED BY ONE LARGE SENSOR. HE STEPPED ONTO THE SLATTED FLOOR BENEATH WHICH WAS A GIANT PROPELLER. SHE SOON SPUN AND CARRIED THE SALAMANDER UP. HE THEN

just stepped on the threshold of the required floor where he needed to go. he then ran down the aisle and straight into his sweetheart's room with his offspring. he ran into the door and unbuttoned his suit in astonishment. it exposed his hippopotamus skin. his wife, and now the mother of his offspring, held the combinations of their genes in her suit. he was a little boy with a hippopotamus skin from his father and a big giant growth on his forehead from his mother. he was literally a baby hippo. salamander gathered him into his arms and buried him. the little boy belched and poked his father's "horn" into the unzipped gap in his overalls. blood instantly gushed out from under the hippo's skin and began bubbling. salamander somehow didn't pay much attention to it. he continued to rock his baby and the whole family, including the midwife standing nearby. everyone was happy.

DAMIAN

THE MOMENT POLEDNICE TRANSPORTED LITTLE DAMIAN TO THE GHOST REALM, CHAOS ENSUED. SUCH A CREATURE HAS NO BUSINESS IN THIS REALM. SMALL, STILL MUTE AND WITH AN INNOCENT EXPRESSION. ONLY HIS EYES TOLD A LOT ABOUT HIM JUST BY LOOKING AT THEM. ALL THE GHOSTS, LIKE APPARITIONS, GHOSTS, GHOSTS, DEMONS AND DARK FAIRIES, THEY ALL REVEALED HIS FATE. HE WAS BORN FROM THE MATURITY OF HUMAN CONCEIT, IN VITRO FERTILIZATION - FERTILIZATION IN A TEST TUBE, THAT WAS ENOUGH REASON TO CONSIDER

HIM A MORE ADVANCED SPECIES OF PEOPLE, THE SO-CALLED HOMO DEUS. ANOTHER ATTRIBUTE WAS ALSO HIS WAY OF COMING INTO THE WORLD - BY CAESAREAN SECTION. BLOOD OF BLOOD WAS INHERITED IN THE FORM OF THE RAREST TYPE. THE EMPIRE OF GHOSTS THEREFORE HAD ITS NEW EMPEROR, WITH BOTH ANCESTRAL AND GENETIC DETERMINATION, TO BE SUPERIOR FROM THE MOMENT HE CAME INTO THE WORLD. EMPEROR DAMIAN I WAS PLACED ON THE THRONE OF SHADOWS, WHICH, FROM AN ANCIENT PROPHECY CIRCULATING IN THE GHOST REALM, WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MADE FOR A PREDESTINED PERSON FROM THE HUMAN REALM WHO WOULD EVENTUALLY CAUSE THE GHOST GENOCIDE. AND SO IT HAPPENED. JUST A LITTLE BOY AND HIS INNOCENT LOOK WAS ENOUGH TO

MAKE THE GHOSTS AND GHOSTS START KILLING EACH OTHER. THE DARK FAIRIES BEGAN TO ATTACK GHOSTS, INCLUDING POLEDNICE, SHE ALSO TOOK IT AWAY WITH A SPELL. ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF HER WAS HER RAG CLOAK FULL OF HOLES. HOWEVER, THE DARK FAIRIES GOT AWAY WITH IT IN THE SECOND WAVE, WHEN SPIRITS CONSPIRED AGAINST THEM WITH MIRAGES, WHICH FLEW THROUGH THEIR BODIES AND TOOK AWAY ALL THEIR LIFE ENERGY. HOWEVER, AS IS USUALLY THE CASE, EVEN THOSE WHO CONSPIRE TOGETHER END UP TURNING AGAINST EACH OTHER, AND SO THE GHOSTS DESTROYED THE GHOSTS BY SHEER FORCE OF WILL. BUT THE SPIRITS FORGOT ABOUT THE DEMONS, WHO WERE PATIENTLY WAITING FOR THEIR MOMENT TO ATTACK. THEY

FULLY HIT ALL THE SPIRITS WEAKENED BY THE BATTLE. BUT AS IS USUAL WITH DEMONS, THEY ARE FICKLE AND TREACHEROUS MISCREANTS WHO HAVE DECIDED TO LEAVE THE DEAD REALM OF GHOSTS. FORTUNATELY, THEY TOOK DAMIAN WITH THEM TO THE HUMAN REALM AND LEFT HIM AT A DESERTED CROSSROADS UNTIL A PASSER-BY MET HIM. BUT WHAT HE WAS ABLE TO INFLUENCE IN THE GHOST REALM WITH HIS MERE EXISTENCE WAS AN OBJECT THAT ONLY HUMANS CAN CONTROL – POLITICS.

UNDERGROUND

-„Cunas!" Yes, that really was his name. He turned around, overgrown and in a sweaty trick. No wonder, the time was in the middle of summer, the year of Mr. 1864. He was holding a porcelain set of a saucer and a cup in his hands. She was first class. It was located in the department store of the Mahler family. Their product range was in the home accessories and equipment category. Mrs. Mahler, who had known him for a long time, called him. She walked up to him through the hall of beautifully decorated chairs and at first let out a relieved sigh.

–„Čunasi Umejsa, if I'm not mistaken, you are a very skilled glazier, aren't you?"

–„Yes, yes," she flattered him and he replied.–„What do you say about that luxurious mug and saucer you're holding in your hand?" Čuňas smiled.

–„It is an impressive work of Austrian glassmakers and goldsmiths," he replied.–„How much would you value it?"

–„About five hundred tolars," he estimated.

–„Okay, I'll give him that price," she said and wrote the price on a piece of paper for the set, which Umejsa carefully put back in its place. The shop built relationships. He continued with another piece. This time she placed the cards with a pen on the table next to him, so that he could complete them himself. Mrs. Mahlerová sat nearby, she had a customer. Čuňas Umejsa finished his work and left the store with a farewell. He appeared in the middle of main Jihlava square, which in the very center had several large family houses stuck together. These houses belonged only to merchants. He went to one of the neighboring

houses, which had tables and chairs with umbrellas in front of its entrance. Here he sat down, bought a newspaper and coffee with wafers. He opened the local papers and got so scared that he also scalded his lips from the hot coffee. He cursed loudly until several heads around turned to him. It was written in the newspaper that an entire street here in the city had sunk into the ground. It drives people from all over to visit. He turned the page, this time the only literally hot news was that the same street in town that had caved in had burned down. Wow?! The city is in a desolate state. He paid, thinking about the news of the paper, and headed home. In the evening he was already dressed better and went out into the streets of the city to see the misfortunes. Even as he walked through the streets, he could hear people talking about the hellfire that had escaped from a gap in the ground that had opened up in the city.

It is said that, here in Jihlava, the ground has opened into hell itself. However, the buildings that had collapsed into

the underground were taken out and partially burned to ashes. The fire was eventually stopped in one of the neighboring streets, as the fire climbed to the roof and then jumped to another and another. Nothing complicated, if the buildings were built in one row. -„Hey guys!" he addressed some gentlemen standing next to the building. They noticed. -„Can you tell me something about the things here?" -„Inu, there are underground passages under the city and these buildings were unlucky that the earth's layer was the thinnest here," said the man briefly. Apparently he was a miner. The corridors were new to Čuňas. -„Wait, what corridors?" -„But, mining corridors. Built since the 13th century." -„What are you doing them for? -„Deep underground beneath the city are deposits of silver. We are also connecting the basements of the central houses and building sewers." -„They wrote in the newspapers that it attracts a large number of local curios and hunters of precious metals. -„Yes, the leaves are not wrong. I've also already loaded some silver." "Would

you take me there?" -„ but sir? What do you want to see there? It's dark, narrow and damp." -„They say that hell comes over there. People in the city talk a lot about it," added the second miner, who had been silent until now. -„I would like to try my luck with the silver, you know. I'm a glazier, so I would save on materials at the goldsmith's," explained Čuňas, already with the vision that he would have his own sets of dishes similar to those he appreciated today at the Mahlers. -„Yes, sir. Well, good. Invite us for a tankard of beer and we can start talking about the price of the tour," the miner set the bar. At the pub near the duck, they agreed on a price for the tour. "70 tolars," the miner said to himself. -„For both or for one?" He demanded clarification from Umejs. -„For one," answered the second miner. The glazier lowered his eyes. "Well, you know, silver is mined there for another tolars," laughed the miner with the greased mouth. -„Don't worry, we'll dig up your cash box for you there," laughed the second miner again under his beard with beer foam. The lights of

the fiery flames crawled along the granite walls sprinkled with the dampness and sweat of the subterranean.

–„I heard that some people have degenerated in these catacombs," said the miner foolishly. He caused Mr. Čuňas considerable anxiety. –„ Prokop! Don't scare our guest. These are not catacombs, no people are buried here. Nevertheless, I personally know cases that have lost their minds in these tunnels," spoke the more mature miner, his voice resonating forward and backward through the darkness of the corridor where the torch flames ended.

They walked in silence for a while. Only their footsteps fumbled along with the sweaty and icy walls. The path was uncharted, difficult to estimate. Chuňas Umejsa was the last to go, and so the field of fiery light from the torch closed just behind him. Weird feeling. The dark tunnel behind him narrowed step by step, all the more as he was deeper in the underground of Jihlava with each step. –„The tunnels here are up to 100 meters deep and some 28 kilometers long. It's not hard to get lost here, but it's

fatal," they stopped in the middle of the intersection of corridors, after the older miner commented on his labyrinth of work. The corridor here split into three directions. -„Well sir, here we are already about ten meters below the surface. If you want to go for silver, then right here, but be prepared that we will go the deepest," warned the most experienced miner. The younger man was shaking just thinking about what stories he had heard. -„And what is in those other corridors? Čunas asked Umejs. A second of silence followed. "Okay, well, I'll tell you and then we'll settle it together," suggested the older miner and continued. "These corridors began to be built in the thirteenth century," he repeated. -„This means that my ancestors and equally employed neighbors, who helped each other, managed to build such a complex system of corridors under the entire city over the course of several centuries that it is from the very center of the city under the main square in depth and towards the outskirts of the city to far away. Therefore, if you wanted to travel

through the city, you should go left from there, that tunnel connects to other tunnels of other mining families. You'd just have to be careful not to end up in some nasty shaft or spider web," the older miner looked deadly serious. Čuňas felt cold. He hated spiders to death. He already imagined him being entwined in a cocoon by a three-meter giant white spider with thin legs. He had to knock, but that didn't help either. That unpleasant feeling remained inside. -„And the middle corridor? asked the glazier. -„It is connected to the sewage system. Unlike the one on the left, it does not connect cellars but channels under the city," explained the miner. -„Okay," said Čuňas and wiped his icy sweaty forehead, as well as the walls of the tunnels around him. That started to soak into them. He slowly but surely became a part of them. He got used to the darkness of the corridors, which he saw for the first time in his life. He still had a chance to turn it around. But what would they think? He didn't know. -„You can climb elsewhere than here, right?" -„Yes, just take the left

corridor. Even the middle one would be fine, but you could quite easily come across rats or drowning people. At worst, on the lunatics living in those canals. Those are the ones who become drowned here first," said the miner.
Čunas had to lean against the wall as his head was spinning from what he heard. She was as slimy and cold as he imagined a drowning man to feel. He had to crouch and heard a rustle behind him, there in the darkness. He closed his eyes and wiped his forehead again. The sound of the fabric of his coat rubbing against his wet skin acted like the bristling hairs of a large wet and sewage-smelling rat baring its teeth at him. As sharp as needles, fleas, most likely attacked by the plague, jump on her. -„Are you okay, Mr. Čuňas?" A younger miner roused him from his nightmare reverie and helped him to his knocking feet. -„Excuse me, my legs just gave out a bit," apologized Mr. Umejsa. He was really fragile inside. "It doesn't look like the mines are quite the place for you," the older miner remarked. Umejsa could only remain silent. -„Okay, here

you go," he handed him his torch. -„No, I can't do that myself. You will have to take me out," pleaded the glazier. The miners looked at each other. -„Well, we'll keep the money for the tour." -„Wait, but I was paying you for preaching." -„Not so then. This is paid by the kilo. Unless you pay us extra." "Krucinal, you couldn't say that right away," Umejsa became anxious again. -„We'll keep the tolars, sir," the younger miner also started. -„Will you take me upstairs?" asked Čuňas once more. -„Well, yes, we will take you out," the miner finally took pity and they hurried up the crooked and slippery stairs. Even so, Čuňas felt that something was pulling him downstairs. They climbed out and Umejs immediately felt better. They agreed and everyone went their separate ways.

After a time that was longer than long, a gendarme stopped by his house. He was very urgent. -„Sir, you are responsible for the death of two miners." -„Sorry?" Umejsa wondered. The gendarme told him how many tears the miner's wife shed that he did not come home the next day.

Umejsa, on the other hand, explained to the gendarme the verbal agreement with the young and old miner. The gendarme warned him that the death of miners is very common and took him by the collar and threw him about. –„You will go and pray to Mrs. Miner, may they be alive." "Well, I'm begging you, such behavior," Umejsa was annoyed. The miner lamented how many children she had, and her husband and brother disappeared into the unreturnable underground. She added that if they really disappeared, then Mr. Čuňas Umejsa would go and sit down. "Or go find them in the underground where you sent them," suggested the gendarme. He pretended that he wanted to help Umejs, but in reality he failed him. Čunas broke into an icy sweat. Only not there! "I'd rather go to prison." Neither the gendarme nor Mrs. Horníková knew how to react, so she started crying and the gendarme threatened Čuňas that there was a guy like him and he could easily come to harm, which could damage the status and reputation of his glassmaking family. Umejsa

felt himself to be in a tight spot. So he hired another miner to take them both on a tour of the underground that they were looking for the missing miners. The miner saw that they were acting urgently, so he charged a large amount of tolars. They set out on the afternoon of the second day. The miner took with him his auxiliary force in the form of his young son. Chetník came with his partner and Čuňas with a sense of belonging to his family, with whom he had made good the previous evening. They entered the tunnels through completely different entrances than where the previous family of miners had taken him. It seemed like every family had their own . -„I know that the family of miners you are looking for has its holes further south, but they are connected deeper anyway. If they went for silver, they had to go deep, and hopefully we'll find them there too. But the question is in what condition," the miner pointed out more precisely.

For a few minutes they just walked in silence down the long corridor somewhere at a steep angle. The miner had a

lantern and a six-year-old boy next to him, who was singing to himself along the way. It was such a catchy tune that it would have been worth recording, but unfortunately none of them knew the notes. It was the melody of a song that didn't exist yet. The two policemen in the back and Čuňas in the middle had torches. Čuňas thought the boy was a genius. Such are sometimes the paradoxes of determination. You are born a miner and so you will be a miner despite the fact that you have more than clear musical talent. –„What a Czech is a musician," the miner's father spoke out of the blue, considering Umejsa. –„Do you mind singing, gendarmes? The miner asked on the way back. –„No sir, there is just a big enough echo," replied the gendarme. The miner smiled and patted the boy on the head. They arrived at a floor full of more tunnels that seemed kaleidoscopic. –„Now pay attention, we are in the main tunnel, which is connected to branches, mostly tunnels or cellars. Keep behind me," advised the miner, nudging the boy with his palm to keep up with him. Again,

despite (or maybe because of) the gendarmes with their batons behind their belts, he felt a strong anxiety towards Čuňas. He was really uncomfortable. The walls here started to swallow him up again. Tension gripped him. The stench, the humidity, the cold, plus what he had heard about the underground. How is it possible that even the two brave miners got lost here? And the two gendarmes in the back, breathing on the back of his neck. He had to straighten his coat collar. They were deep. Some 40 meters. -„This is where the basement layer ends and the sewers begin, please be considerate and alert. You never know who you might meet," the miner warned them ahead of time. He had never seen such expressions as his followers. The smell of the dungeon mingled with the mass of sewage and rot. None of them had experienced such a smell, not even the miner and his son were used to it. -„Do you still want to look for them?" The miner asked a startled Umejsi. He made sure that he didn't want to, but he had to, just considering the two gendarmes behind him.

So they went into the sewer tunnels. Along with getting used to ammonia and the perniciousness of the canal area, Čuňas was also caught by another dangerous trap and that is a mere thought. What if they put it on him? Maybe they hid somewhere and made up their disappearance to get him into trouble? Of course! Because they saw that he wasn't doing well here. And they already had an excuse. Well, that's what I could have thought, that bundle of paranoia was swarming in his head. -„Sometimes these spaces can arouse various ideas or thoughts in people, which are somewhat intrusive, I would say," the miner spoke again out of nowhere. They wallowed in pools of sewage and rot. Something strange and hardened moved under Umejs' feet. He slipped on it and lost his balance. He fell backwards onto the chest of the gendarme, who was cursing. A bone emerged from the water under Chunas's shoes. She was big enough to be human. Čunas broke into a cold sweat and the gendarme got him back on his feet. -„Go on man, we're not going to

get out of this here after all." Čunas turned to him to get a better look at him. The gendarme had a spiraling upward mustache and one squinting eye under an eyebrow that either frowned or was so fused with the other as to be unrecognizable. -„I'm sorry, constable," Umejsa said, but it didn't change the gendarme's appearance. He still had a pouty face.

-„We can continue?"

The miner asked. -„Yes, yes," answered the last gendarme at the back. Unfortunately, Umejs' torch fell into the sewer, so they had to go in a different order and more crowded together. Finally they came to some smelly corner. The procession was blocked by a wooden wall, like a sluice gate. "Well, Cup, your time has come," the miner spoke to his boy, and he happily squeezed into a small crack in the wall and disappeared into it. -„Where did you send him?" He was interrogated by a gendarme. -„He will open for us from the other side," the miner tapped on the slowly rotting piece of planks. -„Sir? Do you hear that?" The other

gendarme suddenly asked, pulling out his baton. Sticky footsteps echoed from the walls of the opposite corridors. And sure enough, a snout with bristles emerged from around the corner. A giant rat with sharp fangs. -„Aah," shouted the gendarme and hit her with his baton right between her disgusting eyes. She squealed and disappeared back. The sound of sticky footsteps grew louder and louder. -„More are coming!" The gendarme warned, and the other had already drawn his baton. Panic was brewing in Umejs. -„Hurry up the mug!" A miner was banging on wood. The two gendarmes, batons drawn, were waiting to see if something would reappear around the corner. The squealing of the rats grew louder and closer. Umejs rumbled when he heard the wooden plank move behind him. By means of a pulley, to which it was attached on the other side by a rope, at the end of which the boy was now pulling. The miner was the first to stretch under the wood with his head down, followed by Čuňas and the gendarmes. Klučina let go of the cable and the wooden

plank fell back down into its position as the protector of the passage. -„Smart mug!" the miner praised the boy. He was smiling. -„Damn, what kind of monsters were those?" He faced Umejsa. -„Nothing we wouldn't know how to deal with," answered one of the gendarmes. You could see the swarthyness on them, like some aspect of their personality that the local underground can awaken in people. They both had pursed lips, rolled their eyes like their inspectors, and still had heavy batons in their hands. -„Now we are going into the tunnel, which already leads to the mines under the city," explained the miner. So they went through that tunnel. -„How did those monsters come after us? He still couldn't come to terms with Umejsa's situation. -„They smelled food," replied the miner dryly. -„Wait, you have food with you?" -„No. We are food," the miner wiped his nose. Umejsa, with astonishment of fear, rejoined the gendarmes, who were already preparing their irons on him.

-„So we are at a depth of about 80 meters, the mines are

already starting here. Unfortunately, most of them have already been mined at the moment, so for the ones we are looking for and the ones you sent here for silver, we still have to go down to the lowest floors, there are still veins of silver there. You should start praying. People can get lost here for good," said the miner before walking out into the depths. Umejsi wiped the icy sweat from his forehead. He already felt more part of the underground than part of this epic group. Still, the rattling of irons behind him spurred him forward. He thought that the prison would probably be as damp and cold as here. He hoped they would find them. The next question was really in what condition. -„My memory doesn't quite work anymore, but I have a feeling that it was here," said the miner at the crossroads, pointing the light of his lantern into the surrounding tunnels. One was full of cobwebs. -„Not this way," he said and continued his way through the tunnel along its turns. They wandered like this for about a few tens of minutes until the miner came across a

puddle, as it seemed to look like at first glance. There were silver coins in it. Tolars. -„It cleans the water, but most miners take it again on the way to the surface. Either we'll run into some miners, or someone left them here," explained the miner. They continued down the dark tunnel. A draft and an ominous silence slowly began to spread from its depths. Veins of silver began to appear along the walls. They walked past them and vents appeared in the walls. They were dark and narrow. -„These are detours to other parts of the mine, only there are dead ends, they lead nowhere," the miner explained. His kid was a little nervous. He looked around a lot. You could tell he was maybe a little scared. Čuňas was no longer sweating, it was just his dizziness from the unknown. Now he felt completely part of the underground. The gendarmes behind him were now in complete ignorance. Something was hiding in one of the turns. The miner beamed at her. One of the miners that Čuňas hired stood there frozen. The miner poked it to suddenly find that it was stiff. Corpse. -„Damn

the king!" Lamented the miner and covered his son's eyes. -„Come with us, Mr. Umejsa!" One of the gendarmes called out. "For God's sake, no!" He panicked Umejs and ran further into the depths of the underground past another miner shoved in a crevice. -„Attention! There's a tunnel!" The miner called to him, but Čuňas ignored the warning and ran towards the darkness. Suddenly, he stepped into the void and slid down the steep wall into the deepest levels of the Jihlava underground. Then he slid down to the ground with his feet. A portal appeared in front of him, about five meters high and three meters wide. It glowed in a kind of torchlight. So was it true after all? Has hell really broken loose here underground? Something stomped here! He looked around scared. Was it Satan himself? Nowhere. It was a hedgehog. He bristled his thorns a piece from Čuňas. Did he get here through a portal? He had the feeling that he might have gone completely crazy and maybe even pissed his pants for that slide down. However, there was no other way. He had no choice but

to find out for himself where the portal led. He stepped into it with his eyes closed.

swamp monster

We have such a special place in the local community. It is a wooden bridge, about ten meters long, leading over the marsh. What is typical for him is that he has a specific smell. He stank of fish and some charring. Decomposition of herbs that no one pruned for decades. Reeds and long grass, a little bamboo grate, and the eternal bubbling of that outdoor drain. People say something lives there. Of course, as in every biotope. But this is something else. What is supposed to inhabit this god-forsaken swamp is supposed to be a being that terrifies even the bravest of the neighborhood. According to the description of the scared to death, it is a slimy, webbed figure with bare skin about the size of a human. Her body is slightly stocky in a shameful posture. From a distance, its smell is identical to that of a swamp. Those who saw it when it decided to climb out of the

shadow and darkness of the swamp describe it as having spotted, or striped, brindled skin of a black-brown or green color. He has yellow eyes that shine like the moon. Two small holes instead of a nose and gills instead of ears. The meringue is small at first glance, but don't be mistaken. He can stretch it to his heart's content and has it full of small sharp teeth in the shape of a triangle. And yet there are no signs of human attack. It only scares the locals, so this place has become a well of superstitions and stories that attract the curious from all over the world. Various researchers have tried to trap this creature for research opinions, but none of them have been successful. The monster from the swamp, which later came to be called Palusa, only appeared in situations that suited it. Her nickname Palusa is derived from Latin, Palus – marsh. And yet even those with worse intentions came against her. All that awaited them was drowning in the swamp. Even these disappearances were eventually attributed by some to Palus, but this was never proven. The only clue was always the remaining bodies of fish with their heads bitten off, which remained thrown on that footbridge and drove away all visitors with their stench and appearance or even symbolism. Over time, this place was left at the mercy of nature, mainly

because of its reputation as the territory of palusi, or swamp monsters.

THE DEVIL THING

His name was Dante, the man I knew. He was an excellent teacher and teacher as life itself is. He wrote, really, and a lot. He was a blogger who took pains to change the shirts he climbed into. He lived in the opposite house on the floor below me. He was too stingy or reckless. He never had blinds on curtains on anything like that, so I always saw what was going on in his apartment. Same thing every time, same thing every week with someone new. Making love with a woman which he then wrote about on his blog, which was famous on the Internet. He always bought a book of his choice with his traffic earnings. It goes hand in hand, if you want to write, you have to read. But it also had one more analogy with him. With each new book came a new girl who, together with the book he read, inspired him to write what he experienced with her. In his articles, he named his girls after the books that were supposed to represent them. Hence the ones he was reading at that time. He was not only a real

heartbreaker but also a writer, unfortunately without a single real book, despite the fact that he had more than enough material for it. He often motivated his readers to write as well: "I hope everyone can write, but only someone really knows what to write about." or:
—„Books are like women's breasts, they don't have to be too big, but beautifully shaped. Size is always neglected in weight, and everyone wants to take their favorite book with them wherever they go. In short, you have to leave the heavy book at home." Or: „Writing is something like taking the reader by the hand and leading him through a story, which is partly to guide the author's imagination but also to open the reader's imagination and soul. As a well-read reader, he was very knowledgeable about literary art and discussed it on his blog. His favorite author was Pommrich. He was reading his book Phobias when he found a woman who lasted more than a week.

She was special. She had one hell of a seductiveness and her eyes always shone like rainbows. As a regular stalker, I watched their antics whenever possible from my living room, which was a few floors up from their apartment. One of her peculiarities was that her nails were cut

into two points. In short, her nail was cut with half a moon. A special style, a special spectacle. One full-moon night, when they were farting together again, the horrible event happened that I would like to describe. From my window I saw her having sex. She on him. But at the stroke of twelve o'clock in the morning some nymphomanic frenzy seized her. It was as if she was running away from the Devil himself.

Huge horns grew from her head, slightly twisted, and her teeth sharpened into a terrifying maw. The body sweated and turned purple. She reminded me of the so-called Krampus, from Germanic legends. Half goat, half demon. Referred to as the Succubus in other cultures. Dante gained her claws in his chest at his climax and she tore it apart with one stiff thrust. She added a second hand as well. Twenty thin but dark lines of blood on his chest, which radiated almost ritualistically and in a stricter spectrum even occultistically, killed him. Before the help I dared to call immediately arrived, she was gone with Dante's soul.

Arcadius knocked on the heavy oak door with a half-moon-shaped brass knocker. There was silence for a second until heavy footsteps came from afar, from nowhere to the door to the space beyond. The door opened and he appeared in it and just stood there. Big overgrown soaked in a torn T-Shirt. -,,What do you want here? Probably Uranus himself asked, as Arc dios guessed from the sign on the corner of this inn. -,,I just need a beer and a pork knuckle," Ark dios sold himself. Uranus let him in. On the table in front of him he placed a pot of smoked knee and a tankard of beer full of foam. Ark dios got down to it right away, gulping down beer as parched as he was. -,,What is? Are you not eating today? Uran asked from behind the bar in his empty inn. -,,I traveled here for

several hours at a time. You can't be surprised," he took an explanatory break from eating. -,,Thanks for opening up to me. I was afraid you'd already be closed," Arkadios finished and continued eating. He cut off pieces of the knee with a knife, dipped it in mustard, wrapped it in sauerkraut and put it in his mouth. He took a bite of bread and washed it down with beer. -,,Why did you come?" -,,I want to do a report and a survey of your temple," he replied with a clap. Uranus was taken aback. He turned aside behind the counter and put his fingers together, his big bearded face twisted into a devilish grin. An aura of evil began to materialize around him. In order not to attract attention, he stopped immediately. -,,It would be so useful for me to have some more snooping hanging around now," grumbled Uran. "But I'm not a publicist," Ark dios grumbled. -,,I'm a mystery hunter." Uran spilled beer both for him and himself. He brought it to him and added: -,,On the account of the company." Ark dios thanked. -,,Are you from the Institute of Occultists?" -,,No, I'm not anymore," he replied.-,,I'm a renegade," he added and took a bite of cabbage.-,,So you belong to the renegades? Uranus asked. -,,You somehow understand it," Ark dios washed down his remark with a

beer. Uranus realized that he could reveal himself easily and so he also drank beer. He wiped his mustache from the foam and gave Ark dios his hand. -„Uranus Herbertus “, Uranus introduced himself by his full name. -„ Ark dios,“ they finally got to know each other.
-„Should I put you to bed or will you continue today? -„What's wrong with you, have you lost your mind? The renegade took a bite. -„Good, good,“ agreed Uranus. -„I will ask you one more question. Did you leave on your own or were you fired? There was an awkward moment of silence. Uranus had already turned to leave without getting an answer, but Arkadios placed a few bills on the table and finally weighed them down with a heavy metal coin. -„It should be enough to cover the costs for you, excuse me, for the trouble with me. Food and drink and also accommodation.“ So Uranus learned nothing, but at least he made money.
Arcadius was lying in a fur bed. He kept tossing and turning, unable to fall asleep. He had to keep thinking about Uranus. Something didn't seem right about him. He was beginning to remember the tales of inns in the mountains that were carried by the paralogic institute. That exactly this type of pub always turns out to be a cannibal. If

he falls asleep, he comes for him and impales him on a hook and turns him into goulash or sausages, and then someone else who came eats him. He wondered if the knee he was eating was really pork. Maybe yes. I sure do, he's just haunted here by himself now. He had to go do something. He got out of bed after uncovering layers of furs mostly from foxes and hares. He had a boar at his feet and a wolf under him. A bearskin was prepared next to the bed for winter days. But now it was summer. Still, the village in the Crater Mountains was slightly below freezing, especially overnight. During the day you could only walk in a T-shirt. Temperature fluctuations here tend to be extreme. Arkadios was only wearing an undergarment that could be described as a pajama coverall with lacing at the chest. He groped in the dark for his backpack, in which his melmeter was hidden under one of the zippers. He turned it on and the night darkness in the house was pierced by rays of light from the digital screens. From one, the frequency of occurrence of anomalies was visible, and the other collected, literally vacuumed, information from the space around. The Melmeter is exactly the invention that brought ghosts and other paranormal phenomena into the scientific discipline.

Thanks to the datasearch system and the timetravel plugin, which was able to search at what time an anomaly could have occurred here and, if so, to compile a scenario in graphic form. In addition, he was also able to predict in percentage terms when the next one would occur. The melmeter on the equalizer showed a frequency of ten Ψ per second, which was not much, but it already indicated something. But it could easily just be the skins, they are remains after all. It always showed him the zero frequency only at his home, for which he was always very grateful. He was already looking forward to being there. Sometimes he imagined with horror what would happen if some frequencies appeared in his home as well. It would only mean that something is chasing him, or something is out for him. But there was another option, that he would be exposed to anomalies so much that he would emit frequencies himself. This would only result in some spirit or entity taking hold of him. He knew how he would proceed - purification or eradication. But now he had to think of something else. He had to be alert. He was at the beginning of his mission. Something didn't seem right about this pub. He reckoned that if the area near his target, the church, where the anomalies

are supposed to occur, then the frequencies must be low here in the inn as well. He just didn't expect that much. 16 fyr was more than enough for this distance. He walked around the room with the melmeter in his hand to collect more data with the sensor, but he also discovered one more thing, that the frequencies also move around the room. That meant only that there must be something here in the inn that was producing those frequencies.
The melmeter indicator ranged from moderate to moderate anomaly and was colored dark green. The number of frequencies increased. He opened the door to the inn's upstairs hallway. He walked on top of her and headed for where the trigger frequency point might lie. He mapped the entire journey just by looking at one of the displays and according to the measured frequencies, which kept rising. He reached one of the doors upstairs. A clear and chilling silence lurked behind them. Until he dies. That morning, that door opened, revealing the terrifying expression of Uranus in the light of the melmeter displays. -,,Are you looking for something?" He asked. Suddenly, as if Arkadios had no tongue, he was completely speechless. -,,What do you have? Uranus continued to ask. Ark dios remained silent,

staring breathlessly at the melmeter displays. The frequency indicator turned red and shot up. Suddenly Uran turned and before he could slam the door behind him he said something like:-,,Go to sleep man! Then the door to Uranus's room slammed shut in front of Arkady's nose. Melmeter caught a cold that morning. Ark dios turned it off and went back to bed. He lay there with his eyes open to the ceiling in disbelief. Is Uranus an anomaly? Or something is stuck on it. It didn't occur to him that he was in danger, but he still couldn't sleep. He waited hours for the early morning to go to the church to collect more valuables. According to the information he had received from the Whitleblowers, this church should be home to the rarest occurrence of anomalies on the continent.

Early in the morning, Arkadios packed up, had breakfast, said goodbye to Uranus, who was still yawning, without any unnecessary words, and left to face the sunrise. Through an old desolate village where roofless stone buildings stood overgrown with tree roots and wild flowers. He rarely came across at least a rotted wooden door, and even those were in a deplorable state. If the building was missing part of the basic structure, they were useless anyway. With

each step he was getting closer to the goal of his long journey. The tower of the formerly white but now gray church rose towards him among the ruins. Melmeter was in front of him and he was gathering data without any scruples. It was controlled by a frequency sensor. Ručička had more and more fluctuations, the closer he got to the church. Now the hand was at one-seventy. It had the same value tonight as he came face to face with Uranus. For a second, he remembered his terrifying face and look, but was immediately chased away by a flock of ravens that had just flown out of one of the ruins. They were also heading towards the church. The entire mountain village was preserved by the cold, but there was no snow. This was due to the high occurrence of anomalies or entities. They were able to disrupt the thermonuclear process of the environmental life cycle. Often their power reached up to the clouds, and so a kind of nebula formed over the village and its surroundings, which did not let the heat rays of the sun through, nor did the snow. You could only talk about rain if it was drizzling and the drops usually dried immediately upon impact. All this he could easily find out with his double-headed melmeter. Based on his experience, he would

simply call this situation in the area a curse. Nevertheless, he lived in a world and a time where and when even these mythical events could be explained with the help of science. But it was enough for him to admit that such things as supernatural powers existed. Their strength is measured using dog units (Ψ), but their actions can already be quantified technologically, depending on how they work. The right part of the melmeter was only a kind of compass, detector, anomaly and entity that by its appearance form and communicate using high frequencies Ψ. Being exposed to high pressure Ψ certainly meant severe damage to the brain, both psychological, and then inevitable death by insanity. And so also quite possible physical damage. Not to mention that such amount of frequencies can only be absorbed in the direct vicinity of the anomaly. Not even a ghost has such numbers as anomalies. A spirit is merely materialized ectoplasm that has appeared and wanders through the astral world. What he learned at the paralogic institute was really only for exceptional individuals. So he was glad that he had learned more than enough to become a renegade. He was on his own now. He had private commissions and

contributed articles to newspapers. The Paralogic Institute had the disadvantage of going after its former members. He killed them in different ways. Inside the institute, things worked quite conservatively, and that really didn't suit Arkady. There were enough renegades, there was no exception. They mostly knew each other, and the oracle of death drove them forward.

She stood in all her majestic height on the hill of a village with narrow streets. Stone paved street with marble sidewalks. Now they were worn and dirty from the mudflows and deposits of dust and microparticles from the anomalies. According to the melmeter, he had collected enough data to overheat the graphics scenario. He just didn't know if he should let it go. That wouldn't be the whole story. Rather, he allowed himself to be carried away by his imagination, cultivated after years of hunting mysteries. On the back of his head, he could feel something rushing through those streets that scared the citizens to death. Something big and agile. Something they ran and tripped over. It was just his feeling. The stones beneath him looked slippery, so he stepped carefully. He weighed each step precisely so as not to touch the joints. But he wasn't such a meticulous person that he had to do it all

the time. Only now for your sense of protection. After a while, even smaller stones were figured in the street paving, and thus more joints were added. Instead of continuing to play his silly childish game, he ignored them and continued to walk normally like a grown man of experience. He was already approaching the church in a straight line. He was in the middle of a small pebble square. The object was surrounded by an old wall one meter high and another one meter high by a metal fence. In the middle was an iron gate that was twisted and ajar. He went through them. There was a jump on the melmeter and the values rose by a quarter of the current value. Now the melmeter scale was colored orange. He looked up from the digital screens to see for himself the size of the gothic church of the god Hypnos. It was about a hundred meters tall. It was built so-called vertically, that is, up towards the god. Its support system was, as usual, made of huge and massive pieces of stone, as the foundations of its corners and walls. It had curved arches and battered stained glass, on which decorative elements could be seen even through the centuries. He stopped in front of a heavy cracked door made of wood reaching four meters. His melmeter kept rising not only in

whistling frequencies but also in data collection. Ψ was held in deep red tones. He had to be careful. The incidence of anomaly or foreign entity could now be as high as fifty percent. In the Institute for Paralogics, this place was only for the most blessed, i.e. the highest ranked. If he had stayed there then, he knew that he would probably never have looked at this place, and if he had, he would have had gray hair. Being a renegade was perhaps his destiny. At least he talked himself into it so he wouldn't regret it. He felt like he was made for the job. She gave him meaning in life. Now he took the handle of the large door. He felt the gaze on him. He looked back. He knew something was watching him, but he couldn't see it. He pulled the door, it was really heavy. He used his tendons and unused muscles. The door stretched and Arkadios could feel the mustiness of the temple. Surely no one had been in it for several decades, if not longer. At least not anyone alive. He didn't have the naive imagination that there weren't undead entities. As the ancient air escaped to the surface, the melmeter began to sway in all directions, and Arkadios heard a woman's scream so shrill that he jumped away from the door with a start and decided to push his

shoulder and then his whole body against the door to close it again. It was as stiff as opening them. Leaning his back against the door, he caught his breath. He will think twice about entering that chapel. His melmeter went crazy for a few long seconds. He touched the hundred Ψ level where he turned completely black. It meant only one thing.
The anomaly or entity hit the device directly. Paralogues whether from the institute or renegades, they all believed in their melmeter first. He wasn't entirely sure if the anomaly or entity was trying to scare him off, or if it was drawn to the entrance to the church. But what he was sure of was that she must have hit him too. The consequences came immediately. He saw a shadow around the corner of the church. He beckoned him to follow him. He set the melmeter in that direction, which, thanks to its anti-shock resistance, returned to its original state without being damaged in any way. Unfortunately, the same couldn't be said for Arkadios's psyche, even though he had a trained psyche, it could do exactly what he feared. Delusions. He was never sure if they were delusions or entities. Anomalies are rather passive and do not react to humans. They have the strongest

frequencies for that. The entity has lesser frequencies but is active and visible. That is, if he wants to show himself and wants to react to a person or an animal. Delusions were the stage where you went crazy and your own subconscious was attacking you. You can't defend against it much, but it won't physically harm you. The entity doesn't affect your mental health that much, but you can easily lose your mind if it's playing with you. There are various rumors about even more strange phenomena than entities or anomalies, and entity anomalies for a change. But it was not possible to prove this even in paralogic. It is claimed that it was an anomaly that absorbed the entity and thus could become imaged, that it would become visible. However, there is only a hypothesis that anomalies can become visible by themselves. They are supposed to work on the principle of a different intelligence. Dark intelligence. Arcadios was initiated into this basic knowledge of paralogic by his grandmaster Hyperion. He knew why he remembered him just now. -,,If you are hit by an entity and an anomaly at the same time, it is quite possible that you will be haunted by delusions and at the same time beware of the entity. You don't know what to expect from her." It was with this memory

that Arkadios was certain that this would be what Hyperion had in mind. He had experienced that feeling once before. Then Hyperion helped him out of it, but he was still at the Paralogic Institute. Now he had to handle it himself. He felt exhausted, not physically but mentally. An anomaly was to blame. That shadow around the corner of the church approached him. Like he even went to check on him to see if he was okay. But Ark dios still didn't know if it was a ghost, an entity, or just a delusion. Until it got to him and breathed in his face. It was an entity. He heard a muffled sound. Something really incomprehensible and unpleasant to listen to. Melmeter automatically translated it. -„Behind the church." Then the wind from the astral dimension died down and flew around the corner of the church. Melmeter beeped. It was showing 100% data collection for the graphics scenario. Arkadios, a renegade of the paralogical institute, decided to let it go. He had no idea what could be waiting for him behind the church. Perhaps the video will make it more clear to him what he has the honor of doing here.

Graphic Script

Akalia let down her slick hair. She was swimming in a river near a village that someone already dared to call a small town. In fact, it was somewhere on the borderline. Outside behind the closed wooden shutters, dogs barked, as they had every night lately. The dogs were restless. So was the flame of the candle that danced its dance on the wick of the wax candle. The reflections of his dance steps played with the shadows on Akalia's faces in the mirror. She anointed herself with virgin olive oil, which was brought to her by one of the young men from the marketplace where she went every day. She was claimed to be the most beautiful girl in the settlement, but she did not feel that way. She knew she was beautiful, but she was pampering herself for someone yet to come that she didn't know about yet. She wanted someone from another place to be the well-traveled woman she saw herself as. She often had suitors from this place show her affection with gifts and their time, but she knew none of them were the right ones. On the other hand, she was

afraid to reject them, so there was a rumor around the village that she was using everyone. So today she decided to go and interview the local father Vitav z Wulf, who resided in the local temple dedicated to the god Hypnos. So she dressed in a laced evening gown with a corset that was, as she called it, understated. She went out into the street after first blowing out her candle. She fled up the stone street with the houses towards the temple. The entrance was prepared for her, as well as for other citizens. Candles along the pebble square, as always, and in the church Hydra played the organ. The church was of Gothic origin, as was its picturesqueness. Curved arches in windows and niches. Built of stones and sandstone as well as plaster. She went inside. She loved the fan vault of this temple and all its local ornamentation. She let the scent of incense pass through her body, but not ordinary, but cinnamon-flavored, as the god Hypnos supposedly demanded in his temples. She liked the smell, it always opened her heart. She crouched to the confession booth, here her big ear already heard something like:-,,Father, I am afraid of death, who will take care of my pub? And about the travel allowance? -,,Don't be afraid Uranus. We will pray to

our god Hypnos for your eternal life and the protection of your inn. Surely he will be lenient with you if you do it for others. I know that your heart is pure. -„Good. Thank you Father Vitav z!" Then the door opened and Uranus came out. They greeted each other neutrally and exchanged places. -„Good evening, father," She whispered through the wooden decorative lattice. -„Good evening Akalia, I am glad that you really arrived, as Hypnos told me," slightly scared Akalia Vitav z, the priest of the church. She didn't really tell anyone. -„I would like to confess about the impulses that have been weighing on me lately. I know many men from the village like me, but I want someone from elsewhere. The world is big and I'm young." -„ Akalia, you are young, yes, but you have to think about life, about your children. After all, you also have a future mother in you. You have to choose not according to yourself, but the best for your descendants," Vitav z interrupted her. -„But what if I don't feel good with him?" -„Hm, I see that you can't handle your egoism. Come on, Mr. Hypnos doesn't think this is bad for us, so I have understanding and advice for you. Go down to the river tomorrow morning to shop for herbs and you will meet your future spouse. -„For god

Hypnos! Thank you Father Vitav z!" -,,Don't be happy yet, girl, you're far from winning," her father surprised her for the last time and then he also left the cabin.
The next day, early in the morning, Akalia went down to the river through the forest, as Father Vitav z had advised her. She was glad to leave the village, there was another death to deal with. Wild dogs have already mauled a fourth person in the past month. So far they were just hunters, that is, until today's dawn, when the village guard was attacked. They bit through the back of his neck and ripped through his entire body despite his leather armor. She was afraid to go into the forest, even though she knew she would have to be a sheep to really be attacked. They mostly climbed where they shouldn't have. She walked along a twig-lined path full of conifer cones all the way down to the river, where a lifeless body lay in tattered and wet rags that had been washed away by the river. She approached him cautiously and had the feeling that she was being watched by someone or something. She looked around but saw no one or anything, only trees and ferns and rocks and the river. She bent down to the body and examined it. He was still a young man. He looked like he had just drowned, water

was running from his mouth. She knew what to do at this moment, after all, she took care of her parents in sickness and old age, as well as, after their death, the wounded and sick in the monastery infirmary. She pressed her hands with a nurse's feeling on the chest and pressed firmly several times. The young man spat out the water and coughed into the jet and vomited on the ground lying on his side. "Welcome back to the living," Akalia greeted him warmly. Something rustled in the bushes and ferns not far from her. However, she saw nothing there again. She lifted the stranger to his feet and helped him to the village. She took him in first. Although the guards helped her in front of the gate, she, as one of the main nurses, insisted that she had to stay with her. She liked him. She fed him and he introduced himself to her as Asariel. After some time, Akalia went to interview Father Wulf one night. She came inside the temple and straight to the cell for confession. Father was already there waiting. "I've been waiting for you, my child," he spoke to her. -,,Father, I fell in love with Asariel and I would like to marry him. I wish you would marry us here in the church. -,,Okay my child and when? -,,One week from today." "Okay then," they agreed.

Akalia got a silk dress, so beautiful! She walked into the church with Asariel. It was a full moon. -„Father? She asked into the silence of the temple. -„Father? She went to Wulf's chamber. She could hear him slowly praying there. Quietly. -„God Hypnos, I know I disobeyed your advice and disappointed you, I deserve this act, this curse. Hypnosus, he finished the prayer. At that moment the church clock began to strike midnight and Hydra played its organ concerto. Father came out of his prayer room. -„What are you doing here Akalia? Vitav z became upset and quickly covered the scars on his body with his robe.
-„Go to the temple, we will perform the ceremony," he ordered her. She did so. Asariel was already there waiting. Father Wulf came and bound their hands with a ribbon. -„Let yourself be yourself," he said. The two lovers kissed. The castellan on the tower struck the first hour of the morning and the first bright, ghostly rays of the moon fell inside. -„Aaaah," the father began to go crazy. He was tearing off his robes and his body was turning into a massive hairy monster. Akalia started to scream but her scream died down after one bite from the Lucanthropus Vitavez.
-„No!" Asariel raged. He drew his sword and

dug it under the Lucanthropus' skin. The beast unfurled and knocked the sword out of the man's hand with its paw. He remained stuck in it until the beast straightened up and tried to strike the man. But Asariel knew how to use his reflexes and avoided the puck. He delivered a blow to the beast's abdominal muscles. She growled, wanting to bite the man, but he was too fast. He got out of her reach so he could dip his sword in the holy water. Hypnos silvered him through her. The beast was already standing behind him and wanted to stuff his entire human head into its gaping mouth. At the last moment, however, Asariel managed to turn around and even with the swing that he took in a pirouette, he cut off the entire claw in her forearm, which soon flew away. She howled again. He slashed her across the muzzle. Again and again. She tried to protect herself with her other buckle, but gradually lost it as well. Such was the power Asariel possessed, which he gained from within himself. The beast had a battered face, thoroughly filleted. He only held on to his skull and that too by force of will. However, his skull was damaged except for the brain, which was inflicted with the last few wounds. Blood and pieces of flesh flew through the air. Asariel was

covered in blood. Likewise, it flowed on the ground of the temple and merged with Akalia's blood. Asariel fell to his knees and cried. He cried and wailed. Luna shone for the thousands of wolves in the woods around the temple and that's why Asariel's wounds from the beast began to sprout fur bristles. Hydra was still playing the organ.

The noise of the melmeter screen signaled the end of the graphic scenario. The other showed a hundred percent degree of high-frequency magnetism. Arkadios stood over Akalia's grave behind the church next to the entity's shadow, aiming his melmeter at the grave that told him the anomaly was there. Delusions converged more and more around the church. He won't stay here. He has to go back. He finally got enough strength and courage to open those temple doors. He heard the organ play again. He felt like he was really going crazy. Coats of arms flew all around him like the eternal guests of this place. Arkadius witnessed something inexplicable, but thanks to his melmeter he recorded it all. Lucanthropos appeared in the form of his spirit, his likeness and himself, like a fresco on the ceiling of a church. Among the sacred symbols, the spirit with bristling fur moved there. Lucanthropos descended the ceiling and ledges down to the altar. The undead Hydra still played notes to the infinity of its eternity as the bitter duel began and ended. Asariel entered the temple with his silver sword. Crossed his power with that of the beast, just like centuries ago. The claws and wild unbridled power of the wraith-like meadowlark against silvered steel. Arcadius watched the whole

thing. It wasn't the first time he'd encountered werewolves. He remembered the case in history of Peter Stumpp, which had also been dealt with while he was enrolled in the paralogical institute. But this was something completely different, he appeared in the middle of a gothic story. Akalia also materialized into a spirit, stood up at the altar and there, trapped in her astral body, waited to see how the fight would turn out. She called out to her lover, but he had to fight his way to her first. Vitavez, in his bestial form, was able to do what he could not do centuries ago. He managed to destroy Asariel's weapon. He grabbed her in his claws and crushed her with all his anger despite the fact that it was visibly hurting his astral body. However, he forgot that he had hurt him, back in the old days. So Asariel was not afraid to face the beast even in his beast form. Now there were two Lucanthropos, both in astral bodies. They went head-to-head and it was difficult for anyone to know their way around this melee. Pieces of fur and skin flew everywhere. They threw themselves from one end of the temple to the other and destroyed most of the already rotten pews. Vitavez reappeared on the ceiling of the temple and Asariel followed him and out of nowhere they were

outside on the tower of the temple. Ark dios had to go outside to watch the fight. The ancient roof was breaking under both of them, and their heavy animal feet were easily sliding down to the ground, or the roof of the temple, which was already quite leaky. Vitavez stretched out his claws and grabbed Asariel by the neck so hard that his blood flowed from him, but it was as translucent as their bodies. Asariel tried to defend himself and clawed as hard as he could, but Vitav z carried him to the very top of the tower of the temple of the god Hypnos. He wanted to end it here once and for all. However, there was a panorama of cloudburst, and the bloody beast was blinded by a ray of sunlight. She stuttered and loosened her grip on Asariel's larynx. He immediately took advantage of the situation and with his left hind paw bounced off Vitav z's chest into a head somersault backwards, during which he managed to deliver a kick to the lower jaw of his uneaten mouth with the same left hind paw. Afterwards, the two beasts found themselves in a free fall from the temple tower down. Asariel's fall was slowed by the rotting roof, under which only the guts of the temple were now, and Vitav z fell directly in front of the entrance onto the

hard pavement at Arkadios' feet. The renegade of the paralogics was not frightened, he knew that it was only a ghost, which, moreover, dissolved before him into the nothingness of his existence. Neither an entity nor an anomaly, a mere mirage or ghost with unsettled accounts stretching back centuries with him and his unsalvageable soul. Until now. Arkadios had to head inside the temple once more. Asariel in beastly form lay dying at the altar, his beloved in his arms. This time they switched their positions. He was dying and she was wailing. Hydra was still playing the organ somewhere on the temple floor. Even these souls finally met and could go together to the heavens to their god Hypnos in his heavenly temple. Both figures evaporated into thin air. Only now could Arkadios leave this place infested with paranormal powers. He turned his back to the altar of the god Hypnos and, with slow but sure steps, made his way back through the village, or small town in the middle of the mountains and forests belonging to the wild animals. He followed the same path he came here. Around Akalia's house and through the crumbling city gate. Where he knew he'd better not stop was the Uranus Inn.

Only on the way past did he peek in. Uranus stood behind his bar, washing down a pint of beer in the silence that remains after death. He was a mere ghost convinced of his own existence. Ark dios continued along the stone path to his carriage. Melmeter was showing him a clear line that he must have gone mad at the top of this place, he too had that feeling after what he had experienced, yet he was still alive. Even now he remembered the teachings from the paralogic institute, the words of Hyperion himself:-,,The line between genius and madness is so thin that you can hardly guess which side you are on. So remember: a living fool is more valuable than a dead genius.

ORNITOLOCOLOGI

SILVIUS FELIX, A FAMOUS ORNITHOLOGIST AND RESEARCHER WAS LYING ON HIS BACK AND WATCHING THE UNDERSIDES OF THE LEAVES OF THE TREES IN THE JUNGLE. HE HAD HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS HEAD AND WONDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO SEE ANY OTHER BIRD THAN THE EXOTIC ONES THAT FLY AROUND HERE ALL THE TIME AND DO THEIR SCREECHING AND FLAPPING BEAKS, PECKING AT TREES, EATING BRAZIL NUTS AND SO ON. WE COULD SIT ON THEIR ACTIVITIES UNTIL MORNING. MR. SILVIUS JUST WATCHED AND LISTENED TO THE BIRDS UNTIL HE SAW ONE FEATHERED BIRD THAT LOOKED LIKE SOME MESOZOIC BIRD. A GIANT BUZZARD, OR A FALCON OR PERHAPS EVEN AN EAGLE. HE FOCUSED SO THAT HE COULD AT LEAST SOMEWHAT BELIEVE THAT IT WAS REALLY THUNDERBIRD. AS THE SUN SHINED INTO HIS EYES, THE HAZE MOVED CLOSER TO HIM UNTIL FINALLY SOMETHING HIT HIS GLASSES. IT WAS SHIT. BIG SMELLY AND GOOEY. HE GOT UP TO WIPE HIMSELF, BUT IT ONLY SMEARED HIS PRESCRIPTION GLASSES

EVEN MORE. HE HAD TO GO DOWN THE HILL TO WHERE THE STREAM FLOWS. BUT THE PATH OF THE BLIND MAN IS NOT A WALK IN THE PARK, HE ROLLED DOWN TO THE STREAM WITH THE BARREL TECHNIQUE. EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING. HE WASHED HIS FACE AND SHATTERED GLASSES. THEY WEREN'T EVEN VERY SCRATCHED. SUDDENLY HE HEARD ANOTHER BIRD. TERRESTRIAL. A HEN FROM THE PRIMEVAL MOUNTAINS - THE TWO-TOED SCARECROW WAS FISHING IN THE WATER ACROSS FROM HIM. WAS IT JUST A CASSOWARY? HE PROBABLY GOT NARROWED AFTER BEING IN THE SUN FOR A LONG TIME. SUDDENLY, ANOTHER BIRD LANDED NEXT TO HIM AND DRANK WATER. SO IS HE CRAZY OR IS HE JUST IMAGINING IT? SILVIUS ASKED HIMSELF AND RINSED HIMSELF WITH MORE WATER TO WAKE UP, BUT THE BIRD WAS STILL STANDING THERE. HE LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE KERYT, THE BRAIN EATER, OR THE NAMIBIAN SUBDRAGON. BOTH WERE LARGE WITH WIDE WINGS AND LONG BEAKS. HE WASN'T SURE IF IT WAS ONE OR THE OTHER, SO HE PREFERRED TO CRAWL OUT OF THE STREAM SLOWLY AND AS QUIETLY AS POSSIBLE. HE RESTED A FEW METERS FROM THE STREAM, HIDDEN IN THE JUNGLE, BUT THEN HE HEARD STRANGE NOISES ABOVE HIM. SO HE RAISED HIS HEAD TO SEE THE BIRD OF LEGEND, KONGAMATO HIMSELF, WITH A SKULL-LIKE HEAD. THE BIRD STUDIED HIM WITH ONE EYE AT THE

SLANTED ANGLE OF ITS HEAD. HOPEFULLY HE WOULDN'T ATTACK, HE PRAYED TO ALL THE GODS SILVIUS KNEW. SUDDENLY IT OPENED ITS BEAK AND LAUNCHED A TERRIFYING GUST DIRECTLY AT THE ORNITHOLOGIST. HE BROKE INTO A DIVING SPRINT ACROSS THE JUNGLE, KNOWING THAT IN A FEW HUNDRED METERS HE HAD TO STOP. OUT OF BREATH, HE RAN OUT OF THE THICKET AND CAUGHT HIS BREATH ON A LONG GRASSY PATCH SOMEWHERE IN THE MOUNTAINS. THAT WAS BY FAR. HE DUSTED HIMSELF OFF AND KEPT LOOKING AROUND IN DISBELIEF. HE HEADED BACK TO THE VILLAGE WITH ONLY ONE THOUGHT. HE RECALLED THAT HIS YOUTHFUL LOVE WAS CRYPTOZOOLOGY.

ACADEMIC QUARTER HOUR

We have a new wing at Miskatonic University here in Arkham. Its special feature is the exhibition that lines the corriders of the classrooms. They are exact models of the monsters that Lovecraft describes in his novels. Each of them is on a brass base. I love to go and look at them, they are beautifully crafted by hand. They are one of the main reasons why I was always late for all the lectures because of them, despite the fact that philosophy classes convinced me that time is just an illusion and so, on the contrary, a long history was a good companion. Even now I can't keep up again, and here stands a miniature of this king of the outer gods, these monsters who were to blame for my lateness. Azatheth, blind idiet god. A swarming and spinning mass of tentacles extending to impossible dimensions. Its tentacles emerge from a mysterious array of a thousand eyes of various sizes and giant, infinitely deep mouths filled with millions of

pointed teeth in rows arranged in a circle. It floats somewhere in the center of the galaxy, as H. P. Lovecraft described it. It is also called the ice, nuclear chaos, demon sultan or deep darkness. All its names are a kind of poetic naming of the end of time, which is its very essence. He is the ever-changing cosmic entity, the god who gives existence to the entire universe as we know it. According to the prophecy, one day in the distant future he is to wake up, or wake up from his blindness. There are words of the composition of the future to ease-dignity. His regaining of power has an uncertain impact on the entire space-time, even the entire history of Miskatonic University ends with this event. Paradoxically, it also begins with her, because he was created together with the universe, the so-called big bang. Next is Nyarlathotep - he's a few meters away if you keep going down the long corridor. He is also called creeping chaos, or black pharaoh. Even he, as an ever-changing cosmic entity and external god, is different in the documentation, so there is only a plastic bust of him. A human chest and shoulders from which a longer neck emerges and on it a humanoid head transformed into the shape of a huge coiled tentacle. The look on his half-human

face could only be described as a sense of rage. He, like each of the outer gods, is worshiped by various cults all over the world, only he, the only one of them, speaks a human language and not only is he similar to humans. The complete opposite is Yog-sothoth, one in all and all in one. It is most often described as a celestial collection of luminous spheres. This outer god lives parallel to the entire universe and is enclosed in his own para-cosmos. Despite the fact that he sees everything and knows everything, he does not interfere in the events of the surrounding universe. She is a cosmic entity of vast experience and knowledge, perhaps that is why she can so easily bring beings who are headed in her direction into madness. That is why she is also known for the fact that only so-called avatars, whom she herself willingly chooses, can act on her behalf as her ambassadors. These are usually old gods who can bend space-time and use their cults of worshipers to make gifts to this entity. A few steps away stands a magnificent depiction of Yig, Father of Serpents, standing proud and strong on his pedestal, just as the Old Sumerian goddess Tiamat and Darkness, a sibling of the Magnum Incominatum (Nameless Nebula), stand as mother and father in his family tree. As a

reptilian-humanoid creature, it has a human form covered in scales, a tail, and a serpent's head.
Due to his familiarity with transforming the slain into his own i.e. reptiles, he is considered one of the ancients. Next, we have an ancient thing called a Shoggoth – an amorphous, formless creature made of protoplasm, eyes, enraged, ever-hungry maws and quivering tentacles. An underrated creature, however, it can overgrow an entire cave complex. His distinctive ability is calling: "..Tekeli li! They flowed!" It is of alien origin and was genetically bred to mindlessly farm the land for their masters. His body was perfectly trained to work both on land and sea, and his discipline was controlled by hypnotic suggestion. But after some time, with the help of evolution, he created his own subconscious about what role he plays in his alien society. They were not satisfied with her. He discovered that his brothers and sisters, like him, were a mere slave. In time, it outgrew its masters, who could not keep their infrastructure under control without these slaves of theirs, and thus were destroyed by their own creations. These creatures are commonly used to help with work throughout space, only on planet Earth they managed to break free

and now live free hiding somewhere from their masters who have the power to enslave them again. Now take just a few steps and you will see a creature called Cthulhu, an ancient god sleeping in the depths of the ocean. Compared to other earthly creatures, it is huge and divine, it is said that it is even the largest of all that ever inhabited the planet earth. It has a human body with dragon wings and slimy reptilian skin that turns into a mass of tentacles that are constantly writhing and reaching for anything they can fix under a smooth head with giant colored eyes that can drive you insane just by looking at them. He, along with his father Dagon and mother Hydra, are the only Deep Ones, and indeed Giants, who are called the holy trio of oceanic races and creatures. Cults of humans or human hybrids mutated with the Deep still exist in the world, who worship them with their sacrifices, which they are often not afraid to give from their own ranks. A well-known example is the Esoteric Order of Dagon. Dagon is an enormously overgrown grotesque humanoid creature with something resembling a fish face, snapping gills, and scaly slimy skin. Mother Hydra is a colossal Deep One, a humanoid creature cursed to grow to gigantic proportions throughout

her life. For that reason too, she is considered the Ancient Goddess of the oceans and the life that develops in it. This trinity also has its ancestors in the family tree of the outer gods. More specifically, Cthulhu, who inherited some of his abilities from the Outer Gods. I will learn more now at the miskatonic history lecture, where I am late again.

DEADDAY

Diego was painted in the traditional face colors of the holiday. It was November 2nd, and the streets were covered with fog. The Day of the Dead celebration was in full swing, but you couldn't tell at first glance. The city seemed deserted. At least in the streets. Only somewhere in the far depths of the big city were the explosions of fireworks. It was dry and the wild wind was blowing fallen leaves of all colors along the sidewalks. Strange, why is there no one here? He walked down the street and looked around to see if he could see at least a living person somewhere. You came here strangely painted and arranged yourself. He scanned the businesses that lined street after street, peering inside to see if they were open. It wasn't. Really strange. He would quite like to buy a bottle, load it up, pour a few drops for the dead, and then cool off his mounting depression. He dumped her somewhere in the sewers to make her disappear from the city. But where will he buy the bottle now? When everything is closed. He had no

idea. He will try the next block, maybe there will be an opening, at least one non-stop. He went around the corner to the next street. Dark clouds in the sky were layered on top of each other. It looked like there would be a cloudburst. Or an inversion. He kept his eyes on the shop windows, hoping that at least one of them would be open. He wasn't. He was standing by one of the windows and watching his bottle, the dream bottle, the one he would have. But it was closed. However, the street was deserted. Nobody anywhere. So what if he broke her up and just married her? Maybe he looked around once to be sure and ...-„Aaaah," he heard some shouting at the end of the street. He turned in that direction, trying to make out shapes in the fog. Someone was tripping over the cobblestones there. He heard wailing and the sound of falling. That person needed help. He took an uncertain step in that direction into the fog. The moaning grew louder until finally the screams were drowned out by the sound of breaking bones and strange clapping. Diego stopped and hesitated. Then a giant orange pumpkin emerged from the fog opposite him. Her eyes and mouth were carved into an evil grin. Her eyes glowed with flame, and from her mouth hung the foot of the dead, which she had now with a sufficiently high probability chewed.

Diego made an immediate retreat. He ran as long as his legs and strength allowed him. But the pumpkin, the creature, chased him with swift leaps. Every time he felt like he was lost, she always caught up with him with her long jump. She burst out of the mist and was on his heels. He couldn't breathe anymore, he needed to stop, at least for a moment and catch his breath. -„He

will eat you alive," his Amygdala - Fear center - told him. His calves hurt, but maybe it was just that, fear, that was fueling his adrenaline. Another corner and another street. It is not for nothing that they say that fear is the most powerful drug. Quite paradoxical. -„He already has you!" Amygdala continued. No, he can't let it end like this, he can't. In the guts of some bloody pumpkin. He looked back. There was nothing behind him, so would he be lost to her? The amygdala must have been lying. -„He already has you! You're already dead! Eat it!" She didn't let herself stop in his head. He looked around to see where he was. In some diverted street, barrels were burning here, and it already indicated that he could come across at least one living person here. He approached the barrel and warmed his hands. A mere black cat ran by. -„He's behind you! He's behind you!" Amygdala screamed. He looked back. There was nothing there. At the same moment, somewhere to his right, a flock of birds flew into the clouds. He was looking in that direction. -„Is anybody there?" He asked. -„Is there! He will eat you!" She continued to haunt Amygdala. Suddenly, the creature jumped out of the fog - a giant man-eating pumpkin. She slammed into the flaming barrel, knocking it to the ground. Diego just dodged the barrel and the open mouth of the voracious pumpkin. He kept running along the street and preferred not to look back. Then the mist spread before him and he saw the open door of an apartment building between two burning barrels. Without further thought, he ran into them and slammed them shut behind him with a creaking sound. He felt a sharp impact and the whole door shook. It was the pumpkin trying to get inside. He stepped back from the door

and waited to see what would happen next. Pumpkin jumped into them once more. -„He will break the door and eat you!" She fired up the Amygdala again. He turned and ran up the stairs to the first floor. -„Hey!" Someone called from behind him as he was about to run upstairs. He turned even with his sweaty back. -„Ha and he has you!" Amygdala spoke again. There was someone in a bear costume standing there. He looked like a mascot. He released the tension for a moment by removing the bear's head from his neck. It was a man. -„I wouldn't go to higher floors. There is Kevin, who really liked the book SAW. He plays Jigsaw every Halloween," the man said in a calm but warning voice. -„The whole top of this house is full of traps. I don't even need to emphasize the fact that he is at home there and he is there alone," he added. Diego approached him. -„Is this supposed to be a joke? He asked. -„No, really. It's stuck there," -„As far as I know, Kevin lives in that big house in that better neighborhood." -„It used to be! There were so many paparazzi after him that he had to settle somewhere else, it was just too much for him. We can't blame him, he's always been like that," explained the man in the bear suit. -„So I invited you to squat?" -„Basically yes. No one takes care of the house, only different types of people live here.

What were those wounds down there?" -„It will sound unbelievable, but I was chased by a giant hungry gourd," summed up Diego. The man grabbed his head with a bear paw. -„Oh the pumpkin! She didn't get in, did she?" -„No no. How do you know about her?" -„Yeah. Look, come here, we won't be here in the corridor," Diego invited to his apartment. There were many more

people in it. They all had masks. They were different, even such Slavic traditional and unseen ones. -„Have you all been here since Halloween? Diego asked. -„No, only some - witches, I think, the rest have been here since Mardi Gras." -„What?" -„Well, we are waiting for our moment. For the coming of spring." -„Ah," Diego wondered. -„Why are you painted like this? -„I celebrate Dia de los Muertos, Day of the Dead. -„Of course, Souls!" One of the witches spoke up. -„Could you explain to me the thing with the pumpkin? Diego asked the man in the bear. -„Well, I can do that. It's a leftover from Halloween, she should stop living at the stroke of midnight tonight," he explained briefly. -„And how is that even possible? Diego was still interested. -„It's the fault of these scumbags!" He pointed at the witch. -„They were celebrating their crazy holiday again. They sacrificed a few innocent kids and lo and behold, we have this giant carnivorous pumpkin terrorizing the whole town. And the best part is that she also ate the very witch who had summoned her, or gave her life. So her power will pass only today." Diego looked in disbelief at the serious expression of the man in the bear disguise. He turned and the warty nose of the witch, who had been looking at them both for some time, objected to him. -„That's right! What are you staring at?" she also launched at Diego and started to laugh about it together with her hideous companion in a crazy style. Diego noticed that the carnivores were passing around a bottle of something good. It was plum wine. Homemade schnapps. He sat down and since he had a lot of time, he drank with them. The bagpipes were playing in the room, a wandering band that usually plays at funerals and accompanies carnivals, during

Their procession. After a few locs, his amygdala fell asleep and instead he came to a rather fundamental realization - this world is actually quite cruel.

NEW JOB

I got a new position as an elevator assistant. A well-paid job in a giant tower block, an office building. Full of businessmen in expensive suits, lawyers, investors, residents, owners and the like. my only job is to be dressed in a grotesque suit with a cap and push the floor buttons in the correct order that the visitors choose. I have gloves, as requested by the jersey. The elevator is big enough that the first year I didn't even think about my claustrophobia. After a year, however, mild symptoms began to appear. So the doctor on the 78th floor gave me a prescription for pills. I started taking them the very next day. I felt great, my claustrophobia was gone. I was waiting on the ground floor for the people who wanted to take the elevator away, when a dead woman entered the elevator. A real death. Terrified that he was coming

for me, I was unable to move. -„I'll ask for the 88th floor," she spoke to me. Trembling, I pressed one of the 100 floor buttons. The elevator closed and we went up. I watched her the entire silent way. She wore a long black hooded uniform with finger bones sticking out and holding a long scythe. Without a word she got out and rode down. I wondered if it was from the pills. I looked at the package insert for side effects, but there was no indication that I was seeing any of them. This is how she drove me up and down every day, each time to a different floor, and each time someone died on that floor. One day I asked her when she would come for me. She turned her skull on me and explained that I will operate the elevator here until the end of the days of this building, that I am also her servant. I'm just an elevator operator after all.

PLAN

He was awakened by a headache. When he opened his eyes, he still saw only darkness. He didn't know if it was because his head hurt so much or because he had something tied around his eyes. But the truth was obvious. He just had to get used to the dark. He was in a windowless room. His hands, feet and body were tied to a hard chair. He jerked, but the chair didn't budge. Oh the headache. The last

THING HE REMEMBERED WAS SOMEONE HITTING HIM ON THE HEAD. AT LEAST HE THOUGHT. HIS CONDITION COULD BE SLIGHTLY APPROACHING THE STATE OF AMNESIA. OKAY, BUT WHAT IS HE DOING HERE? THE DOOR OPENED BEFORE HIM. A TALL RECTANGLE LINED WITH LIGHT. THEN IT ALL LIT UP AND A FIGURE APPEARED IN IT. SHE CLOSED IT BEHIND HER AND THEN PRESSED A BUTTON ON THE WALL. A LIGHT BULB FLASHED ABOVE THE TRAPPED MAN AND HE WAS BLINDED BY THE LIGHT. THE FIGURE TURNED OUT TO BE A MAN IN A HOOD. –„SO IT'S FINALLY YOUR TURN. WE'RE JUST WAITING FOR THE TORTURE EXPERT TO ARRIVE. THEN IT WILL BE A LONG TIME BEFORE YOU GO IN EXCRUCIATING PAIN," SPOKE THE HOODED MAN. THE BOUND MAN WAS SILENT. –„ARE YOU THIRSTY? OR HUNGER? SO PET HIM AND CALL HIM BABY. ACTUALLY, YOU CAN'T EVEN SCRATCH YOUR ASS," THE COCOONED MAN MOCKED HIM. HE THEN TURNED AND SLAMMED THE IRON DOOR BEHIND HIM. THE PRISONER WAS ALONE AGAIN. HE THOUGHT, TRYING TO REMEMBER THROUGH THE EXCRUCIATING HEADACHE. AT ANY COST. A LIGHT BULB FLICKERED ABOVE HIM.

SHE WAS WITH HIM WHEN THEY WERE AMBUSHED AND KIDNAPPED AND SHE WAS WITH HIM ALL THE TIME BEFORE THAT. –„THAT'S WHAT HE WANTS..," SHE UTTERED INTO THE SILENCE AROUND HER, WHILE SHE WAS FORCED TO KNEEL

BY THE DUG PIT FOR HER BODY. –„WHAT DID YOU SAY? A HOODED MAN ASKED BEHIND HER WITH A GUN IN HIS HAND. –„HE'S PROBABLY ALREADY TALKING ABOUT GOD," ANOTHER OF THE COCOONED MEN AMUSED HIMSELF. –„GAG HER, LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH," ADDED ANOTHER ONE OF THEM. –„I'M IN A HURRY TO GET HOME TO THE KIDS," HE ADDED. –„YES, OF COURSE, BROTHER," SAID THE PREVIOUS ONE AND HANDED OVER SOMETHING THAT LOOKED LIKE A GAG. KITCHEN TOWEL. –„I CAN GIVE HER STRAIGHT DONUTS," COMMENTED THE ONE STANDING WITH THE GUN. –„PUT IT IN THERE!" ONE OF THE OTHERS SAID AMBIGUOUSLY. "I WAS TALKING ABOUT HIM," SHE SPOKE AGAIN. –„OF WHOM?" THE PUPA ASKED. SHE LOOKED DOWN FROM THE OVERGROWN HILL ABOVE THE FIELD AT THE FARMHOUSE WHERE SASKIE WAS CHAINED AND IMPRISONED. –„HE ALREADY SHOT HER THE FUCKER!" THE COCOON RUSHING OUT OF THEM STIFFENED. –„HEY! I HAVE THE THUG AND I WANT TO HEAR HER LAST WORDS FROM HER, SHE WON'T ESCAPE HERE ANYWAY," SAID THE ARMED MAN, TAPPING HER ROPE-BOUND LEGS WITH HIS SHOE. –„THE WHOLE THING AS IT IS

NOW, THAT'S HOW HE WANTED IT, YOU'RE GOING EXACTLY ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN," SHE ADDED. –„WHOSE PLAN? "SASKI'S," SHE EXPLAINED. –„IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE A JOKE? MORE INTRIGUE? YOU'VE BEEN TELLING US ABOUT HIM THE WHOLE TIME AND NOW YOU WANT TO GET OUT OF IT," THE ARMED MAN SPOKE.

–„NO, REALLY. HE WAS INSPIRED BY THE BIBLE, JESUS, I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE HIS JUDAS," SHE EXPLAINED. –„WHAT KIND OF CRAP IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE? ONE GOT UP ANGRILY BECAUSE HE HAD BEEN SITTING ALL THE TIME. –„DO YOU REALLY WANT TO LISTEN TO THIS NONSENSE? "WELL, WE HAVE TO FOLLOW OUR ORDERS ANYWAY," SAID THE ARMED MAN, POINTING AT HER. –„NO! WAIT, I'M INTERESTED IN THIS," HE FOLDED HIS HAND WITH THE GUN TO THE GROUND, THE THIRD ONE AGAIN. –„WHAT IS HIS PLAN? LET HIM SHOOT YOU AND TORTURE HIM?" HE ASKED. –„REALLY? FIRST YOU WERE IN A HURRY AND NOW YOU'RE MESSING WITH HIM," THE ARMED MAN WAS STARTING TO GET ANGRY. –„LOOK, THIS IS IMPORTANT!" –„WHAT AM I ASKING YOU FOR? THIS IS HOW HE TRIES TO BUY TIME!" THE TWO IN BALACLAVAS STARTED ARGUING WITH EACH OTHER. THE THIRD

IMMEDIATELY JUMPED UP TOO, LEAVE IT! LOOK!" HE WAS POINTING DOWN THE HILL. A LARGE BLACK CLOUD FILLED WITH HAIL APPEARED OVER THE FARM. THE WIND WAS PICKING UP A LOT. THIS WAS DUE TO THE INTELLIGENCE OF HYDRIEL, WHO WAS SUBCONSCIOUSLY SUMMONED BY SASKIE, AND CORADIEL, WHO IN TURN WAS CONTROLLED BY JOSEFINA. SASKIE CONCENTRATED HIS THOUGHTS INTENSELY ON THE ONE THING THAT COULD SAVE HIM. HIS HEAD STILL HURT AND HE COULD FEEL A LARGE BRUISE ON IT. BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW HIS PLAN. ALL HE COULD DO NOW WAS CONCENTRATE AND BREATHE. HE INSTINCTIVELY THOUGHT OF WATER. HE WAS SO THIRSTY. SLOWLY BUT SURELY, RAIN BEGAN TO FALL ON THE ROOF. RHYTHMIC AND PUNCTUATED BY THUNDER IN THE DISTANCE. IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES, THE RAIN TURNED INTO HAIL AND QUICKLY BOTH FELL AND DRAINED THE PIPES. THE SAME SOUND CONTINUED TO GROW UNTIL HOLES APPEARED IN THE ROOF. THE WATER FINALLY DRIPPED ON SASKIE'S HEAD AND HE LEANED BACK TO DRINK. PLEASANTLY. THE NEXT MOMENT HE HEARD HEAVY FOOTSTEPS IN THE CORRIDOR. THEN THE METAL DOOR OPENED WITH A RESONANCE. THE GUY WAS STANDING IN THEM. TORMENTOR. HE HAD A LEATHER APRON WITH TOOLS FOR HIS USE AND A HOOD WITH A BEARD STICKING OUT FROM UNDER IT. HE SLAMMED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM AND SLOWLY WALKED OUT TO MEET THE PRISONER. THE MEN THE ORGANIZATION HAD BEEN CHASING FOR

YEARS. HE HAD A REPUTATION AS A PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADER, NOTHING REMOTELY CLOSE TO A TORTURER. THE CLOSEST THEY'LL EVER GET IS WHEN HE CUTS OFF SASKIE'S BIRD OR SOME OTHER PART OF HIS BODY, BUT ALL RIGHT.

JOSEFINA, WHO WAS STILL KNEELING, THIS TIME THOUGHT ONLY OF THE HEAT, ONLY OF THE FIRE. SHE SUMMONED THE INTELLIGENCE OF JOVIS. WITH HER EYES CLOSED, SHE SENSED THE ELEMENTS THROUGH HER SKIN PORES AND COMPLETELY DISMISSED THE FACT THAT THERE WERE MEN AROUND HER FIGHTING FOR HER LIFE. AFTER ALL, AS ALWAYS IN HER LIFE. BUT THE FINAL SHOT WAS REPLACED BY A LIGHTNING STRIKE FROM A WINDY SKY COVERED WITH BLACK RAIN CLOUDS. A TREE ON THE EDGE OF THE FOREST RIGHT NEXT TO HER GALLOWS CAUGHT FIRE. ALL THREE PUPPERS WERE STARTLED. –„SHIT! I'D RATHER RUN TO THE CAR. SHOOT HER AND HURRY," THE ONE BEHIND HER GAVE THE GUN TO ANOTHER ONE OF THEM AND WENT TO SIT IN THE CAR. THE SECOND OF THE THREE JOINED HIM TOGETHER. THERE WAS ONLY ONE COCOONED ALONE WITH A GUN AND THAT GIRL LEFT. –„YOU WON'T DO DIRTY WORK FOR OTHERS, YOU HAVE CHILDREN AT HOME. THEN HOW CAN YOU PLAY WITH YOUR BLOODY HANDS," SHE SPOKE TO HIM. –„SHUT YOUR BEAK ALREADY!" HE STUCK A GAG IN HER MOUTH. HE

APPROACHED HER FROM BEHIND AND PUT THE BARREL OF THE GUN TO HER HEAD. THE WIND WAS STRONG AND THE RAIN WAS BEATING IN HIS FACE. THERE WAS THE SOUND OF THE CAR'S ENGINE TURNING ON. HE TURNED HIS HEAD AWAY FROM HIS WORK TO MAKE SURE THE CAR WASN'T LEAVING WITHOUT HIM. –„I DON'T KNOW IF YOUR CHILDREN GO TO SCOUTS, BUT I WOULD SAY THAT YOU CAN MAKE BETTER KNOTS THAN THE THREE OF YOU COMBINED," SHE SAID. THE MAN STUFFED A GAG IN HER MOUTH, BUT AT THAT MOMENT SHE BIT HIS FINGERS. HE YELLED AND MESSED UP. THE UNTIED JOSEFINA WAS STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM AND TOOK THE PISTOL FROM HIS HAND. HE WANTED TO GIVE HER A BLOW, BUT THE WOMAN MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.

THAT'S WHAT THE TORTURER TOOK HIS FAVORITE GARDEN SHEARS ON THE FINGERS OF MR. SASKY. ANOTHER PROPHET OF GOD. HE TOOK HIS HAND AND PLACED HIS FINGERS BETWEEN THE BLADES. SASKIE PANTED. THE TORTURER WANTED TO SQUEEZE THE SCISSORS, BUT... DID THEY GET STUCK? HE SQUEEZED WITH BOTH HANDS. NOTHING. IT DIDN'T WORK WITH THEM EITHER. SASKIE REALIZED THAT HE HAD FORGOTTEN HIS ORIGINAL PLAN, BUT HE SUDDENLY REMEMBERED SOMETHING HE HAD READ IN A PSYCHOLOGY BOOK, THAT WHAT YOU WANT TO DO ALL ALONG, YOU END UP NOT DOING ON PURPOSE, THAT YOU

CHANGE YOUR MIND IN THE FINAL SITUATION. AFTER ALL, HE DIDN'T WANT TO BE MARTYRED. DISGUSTINGLY AND CRUELLY BY THIS WRETCH.

–„FUSE?" IT CAME OUT OF SASKIE OUT OF THE BLUE. IN THE NEXT MOMENT, THERE WAS DARKNESS. IF THE LIGHTNING HAD NOT BLOWN THE FUSES OF THE WHOLE DWELLING, THE TORTURER WOULD HAVE FINALLY DISCOVERED THAT HE REALLY HAD FORGOTTEN THE FUSE ON THOSE SCISSORS. NOW HE HAD TO PUT THEM DOWN AGAIN. THE TORTURER STOOD UP STARTLED, AND IN THE SPEED AND DARKNESS THAT SASKIE'S FACE HADN'T HAD TIME TO GET USED TO IN ALL THE COMMOTION, HE ONLY SAW THE ENEMY AS A BLUR IN THE DARKNESS. AND SUDDENLY HE FELT PRESSURE ON HIS EYELIDS AND WHEN HE CLOSED THEM HE SAW FEAR. IN THE NEXT MOMENT THERE WAS A STRANGE NOISE AND PART OF THE CEILING FELL ON THE TORTURER. HEAVY RAIN AND A BIT OF LIGHT CAME INTO THE ROOM. A PIECE OF IRON PLATE WAS NOW STANDING VERTICALLY A METER IN FRONT OF SASUKE. RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM, THE TORTURER CHANGED INTO NOTHING MORE THAN LEGS STICKING OUT FROM UNDER A PIECE OF THE CRUMBLING HOUSE. THEN THE WIND, WITH WHICH JOSEFINA ALSO TRAVELED, LEANED AGAINST THE ROOF. HE ROBBED A PIECE OF THE ROOF WHERE IT WAS MADE OF IRON SHEETS. ONE FALLEN PIECE OF THE HOUSE SLID DOWN AND SANK INTO THE BUILDING RIGHT WHERE IT WAS NEEDED. SHE BEGGED THE HEAVENS NOT TO

HURT SASKIE. HER IMPACT WASN'T PLEASANT EITHER, SHE WAS PRETTY MESSED UP. BUT NOW SHE WAS RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM. SHE SWOOPED DOWN THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE ROOF. SHE APPROACHED HIM AND BEGAN TO UNTIE HIM.

–„THANK GOD THAT YOU ARE HERE JOSEFINA," HE THANKED THE HEAVENS. WHEN HE WAS FINALLY ON HIS FEET, THEY WERE ABLE TO GO OUTSIDE. BUT THE DOOR LED TO THE MIDDLE OF THE COURTYARD, WHERE TOGETHER WITH THE CORE STOOD THE ONLY ACHILLES TENDON OF THE ORGANIZATION – ITS LEADER. THEY RAN OUT OF THE BUILDING, AND THE OTHERS IN THE HOODS IMMEDIATELY SAW THAT THEY HAD ESCAPED FROM THEIR CAPTIVITY. BUT BY THEN, SHOTS WERE HEARD IN THE SIDES OF JOSEFINA'S BACK. BUT SHE CALLED UPON THE FORCES OF THE EARTH, MARBUEL, AND ALL AROUND HER THE SURROUNDING COBBLESTONES ROSE FROM THE GROUND AND PROTECTED HER BODY FROM THE MACHINE GUN BULLETS. WHEN THE SHOOTING STOPPED, JOSEFINA CRUSHED ALL THE WEAPONS OF THE SURROUNDING MEMBERS OF THE ORGANIZATION WITH A MERE BREATH. AFTER THIS PHENOMENON, THEY KNELT DOWN AND BEGAN TO PRAY. AT THAT MOMENT, SASKIE PEEKED OUT FROM BEHIND HER. HE WAS BY JOSEFINA'S SIDE THE WHOLE TIME, ONLY ABLE TO BE COVERED BY HER BEAUTY. HE FINALLY STARTED TO REMEMBER. THEY HELD HANDS AND

FLEW AWAY THROUGH THE ETHER – AWAY THROUGH SPACE-TIME. METATRON HELPED THEM WITH THAT.

THEY APPEARED PRECISELY EACH IN THEIR MAGICAL CROSS OF LIT CANDLES THAT WERE IN THE BASEMENT OF SASKIE'S HOUSE, WHERE HE HAD SET UP A CENTER FOR THE FOLLOWERS OF HIS FAITH IN WHITE MAGIC. HERE THEIR CANDLES ALL GLOWED FOR THEIR POWER TO CONTROL THE ELEMENTS. YELLOW TO THE EAST, RED TO THE SOUTH, BLUE TO THE WEST, GREEN TO THE NORTH. ONLY SASKIE AND JOSEFINA HAD A DAGGER IN THE EAST, A MAGIC WAND IN THE SOUTH, AND A CHALICE IN THE WEST. SASKIE HAD A SMALL PENTAGRAM AND JOSEFINA'S SALT BOWL TO THE NORTH. THEY WERE ALREADY SAFE HERE. –„WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO NEXT? THE ORGANIZATION WILL GO AFTER US WHEN THEY FIND OUT THAT WE RAN AWAY," THOUGHT JOSEFINA. –„WE WILL CALL ALL OUR MEMBERS TOGETHER AND START A JOINT MEDITATION. AFTER THAT WE'LL COME UP WITH A PLAN FOR WHAT TO DO NEXT," SASKIE REPLIED. HE DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE THAT HE HAD ALREADY EXPERIENCED THIS ONCE. BUT THIS WAS QUITE A PAINFUL DE JA VU.

MYSTIC GANG

IT WAS COLD IN THE GREAT LIVING ROOM. COBWEBS HUNG EVERYWHERE, ALONG THE LONG DINING TABLE AND ANTIQUE CHAIRS. DUST HAD SETTLED ON THE FRAMES OF THE PICTURES, AND SOME CLUMPS OF IT WERE EVEN FLOATING IN SPACE. SUDDENLY, OUT OF NOWHERE, THE PRESENCE OF MELUSINA WAS HEARD. SHE WHISTLED THROUGH THE SILENT HALL, TAKING THE LARGE CLUMP OF DUST WITH HER. SHE FLEW INTO THE FIREPLACE AND FLEW UP THE CHIMNEY. HOWEVER, SHE HAD A FIERY TAIL THAT IGNITED THE LAST REMAINING EMBERS IN THE FIREPLACE. AFTER THAT, A LOG WAS SLOWLY PLACED INTO IT, WHICH SOON CAUGHT FIRE. A HAND WITH LONG PAINTED NAILS PUT IT THERE. IT WAS THE HAND OF A WITCH THAT DISCOVERED THIS PLACE. AN OLD ABANDONED HOUSE SOMEWHERE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE LIVING ROOM WAS A BOOKCASE AGAINST THE WALL AND A LONG COUCH. A DARK GHOSTLY FIGURE FROM THE SHADOWS SAT ON IT. THE WITCH HAD NO IDEA IF SHE HAD BEEN THERE BEFORE THE FIRE IN THE HEARTH HAD STARTED, BUT SHE WAS SURE THAT IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS LIGHT THAT SHE WAS VISIBLE. WITHOUT LIGHT THERE IS NO SHADOW. THE SHADOWY FIGURE WAS NOT IDENTIFIABLE. SHE WAS JUST A

shadow. First she blinked, then she straightened, and then she spoke. —,,Where am I? It looks terrible in here." —,,What looks terrible here? I'll tell you what's really terrible." The witch, who was sweeping the floor in the meantime, reacted immediately. —,,Always, when I move somewhere, someone appears there, just like you now." —,,How will he discover? So where am I?" He continued to search the ghostly shadow around the room for God knows what. —,,At my place!" The witch finally answered matter-of-factly and made a motion with the broom that was supposed to push the darkly transparent figure away from the couch. But instead, the broom handle just went through. —,,How can I be at your house?" The figure continued to ask. The witch was just amazed. —,,Get out of here!" She screamed as the raised freckle on the tip of her nose swayed. The dark figure stood up of its own accord and walked out onto the street as if it were nothing. The witch looked quite surprised for a moment and then went back to dusting. In the blink of an eye, the shadowy persona reappeared on the dusty couch. —,,What do you still want here? I must have told you something, didn't I? Look at me!" The witch started deliberately dusting the figure with her broom, thinking it would expel it. The figure stood up and without a single sign of reluctance walked through the wall out into the street where the strong wind was blowing. But before the witch started sweeping again, the figure was already sitting on the couch again. —,,What are you doing here again? Do you want to piss me off?" —,,I... I'm sorry, that's all." The ghost spoke. She was already aiming the broom at him again, even though she knew it would go through

again. Only now did she finally notice what she couldn't see with her eyes. Bones. A skeleton sitting on the end of a sofa. —,,What is it?" she asked. —,,Skeleton, remains," replied the entity from the shadows.

—,,Of course, but whose?" curiosity materialized in the witch's face. —,,How come I didn't notice her before? Oh, I'm so stupid!" —,, Come on. I ask her: Skeleton, what is your name? Whose are you?" The shadowy figure tried to take the initiative this time and elbowed the skeleton. The skeleton rattled and the skull fell to the ground with a thud. —,,Oh hell, she probably won't be like us," answered the persona disappointed. —,,Do you think she is real? The witch added a naive question as she lifted the skull from the ground. —,,Of course it's real, you idiot." She was staring the skull straight in the face. She wasn't even missing a tooth. As if the skull was mocking her. For this, she suffered from a thin asymmetric hole in the forehead area. —,,I haven't seen this yet," the witch showed the bald skull to the shadow on the couch. —,,Do you think the hole appeared there before the poor person's death or after it? asked the shadow. —,,Hard to say," thought the witch and grabbed her chin. —,,If the crack had been caused by a firearm, it would have left the back of the skull shattered, the top of the head would have been shattered, but that is completely undamaged." —,,Let's see, expert investigator," joked the shadow on the couch. —,,I know about ballistics big ball, I'm just a witch, anyone with just common sense would have figured this out," she tried to get out of the awkward position and put the skull back in its place — on the couch between the shadow and the rest

of the skeleton. She then stepped in next to the shadow where she folded her arms at her waist as she looked into the library. —,,It is said that nothing says more about a person than his library." —,,Where did you hear that?" —,,I just made it up. Can you read shadows?" —,,I don't know. Let's try," He reached into the library for one of the books. She had nothing printed on her back. He opened it. —,,It looks like a diary, it has no author or headings." "Will you read it?" —,,Yeah, I feel like I know those letters," He flipped through the first few pages. —,,He writes here about some gnome that will settle here when it is habitable again." —,,What? Is that really there?" The witch jumped up to him and peered into his book over his shoulder. —,,Did someone here talk about me? A voice that sounded half raspy came out. At that the witch turned around, what or who is talking here. In the doorway now stood a cocked head and a smile of strange teeth. Curly unkempt hair and ears sticking up. "Are you the gnome?" —,,Yeah. My name is Filius." —,,That's cool. I Sarahah. This was supposed to be just my home and not have two sub—tenants here." —,,Sarahah is also written about you in that book." —,,What?" —,,Yes, It is said that a witch also takes up residence in the house, but the name is not mentioned here. —,,What kind of nonsense is this," She took the diary in her hand. —,,It's really there, isn't it? Here are written hints and tips for haunting the city." —,,What," They both blurted out, the shadow and the gnome Filius with his teeth, reminiscent of a troll's teeth. All three were now behind the same book. —,,What is it supposed to mean? —,,It will probably be necessary to haunt the city so that

people realize that their haunting is over. Instead of what drunkards and junkies do and what the law is short on, you will intervene." –,,Look, he's orderine you to do this," Filius commented on what the shadow had just recited. –,,Why only me? You are ghosts too," said the witch. –,,Well, I can't leave the house." said the shadow.–,,and I'm lazy, I want to make something at home." the gnome stated his reason. The witch stood to her side. –,,You're kidding me." –,,don't worry Sarahah, I'll fix your broom to fly like Nimbus two thousand." –,, Pfff? Seriously? Why should I even live here with you, just because it's written in some book?"–,,It looks like a diary, probably of the former owner of this ruined house." –,,and who is it?" –,,I have no idea." –,,isn't there a name on the doorbell? –,,Look." The witch grunted with an eight column and opened the door of the house, through which she went out onto the porch, in front of which was the main road and behind it was the school where the children went. One just noticed how the witch was standing there in the doorway and then she went down the stairs to the gate of the fence , which she opened, looked at the doorbell and mailbox from the outside.It was overflowing with leaflets, but the name was nowhere to be seen.

the child in front of her began to cry. the witch just looked at him with big eyes and then made a motion with her hands as if commanding the wind and the child blew it so that it was so startled that it stopped crying. the witch smiled and headed back inside the house. –,,the name isn't really there."–,,i said it, why didn't you believe me?" –,,because now you edited the past so that you could have crap on me now. you better give me the book," she snatched it from the shadow's hands and began.–,,they need to be intimidated here. most likely, smelly junkies live there, " the witch sarahah wondered about the address.–,,what? it's there?" –,,come on, i have to go there." –,,why?" –,,it says that i am a witch from now on, to scare." –,,okay, then get out there," the gnome tried to push her. –,,wait, fix the broom first. and i also have to figure out what spells to use on them. it requires good preparation, i haven't haunted like this in a long time ." –,,i don't like that we have to follow that book at all," commented the shadow immediately.–,,we have to follow something. even witches follow books, look, there's even a lexicon," the gnome raised his bitten index finger nail pointing at multitudes of grimoires in the library. the witch took one in her hand and opened it. she read it for a while and then looked up. –,,it seems that the previous owner was a fan of occult philosophy and the mysterious theme in general," she said quietly.–, "yeah, it's mentioned here and in that diary," commented a shadow leafing through a hardback manuscript. he is said to have studied them all his life and applied some of them," added the shadow. "interesting," said the witch with a smile and

started reading the book again. After a while, she leafed through it and moved on to the next one. This time, it was finally some more intended for her.The picatrix book specialized in a type of magic named as medieval astronomy associated with magical rituals. Originally written in arabic. —,,That's why it has been preserved until today, thanks to the territory of the Holy Empire, the Romans would have set it on fire." "Did you say something?" asked the shadow. —,,No no, I'm just reading something here," she took the book to her room and examined the first findimes. After a time equal to as many hours as there are months in a year, the three of them gathered in a room with a fireplace and a bookcase. Filius had a broom ready for Sarahah and she had the right conjunction of planets ready to carry out her calling. She jumped on the broom and sped through the window out into the city. "When she comes back, I have another job for her," said the shadow. —,,And there is nothing there for me? asked the gnome. —,,Yes, it is said that you should invent a model of the planets in the system around the sun, so that next time it will be better and faster for Sarahah to model the right situation for the next magic and haunting." —,,Okay, I'll go for it," the gnome crawled into his lair in the basement, where he had his workshop. The shadow continued to read the next part of the diary from the bookshelf. —,,So how did the haunting go? the shadow asked when Sarahah returned from her mission. —,,I scared them to death. I didn't expect it myself." —,,What did they look like? the gnome who climbed out of the cellar also asked. —,,One of them, who was lying semi—unconscious in the hallway of the house, just opened his mouth

like a carp, probably delirious. the other two served the brewhouse."
—,,what? do i cook?" —,,yeah. one of the two caught wind that i was fooling around and started running. he must have been really overdressed, because he took it straight from the window. the last one of them took a gun saying i was just another photo and fired..."—,,and?" he pricked up the gnome's ears. "well, i swept her with my broom," she showed them. the gnome immediately laughed. the bullet was really caught by the twigs for sweeping. he strengthened them around so that they would be more solid together in the bundle. —,,you can see it here, if you hold the twigs tightly to you, they can catch even a bullet. honest gnomish work." —,,that's probably not ordinary wood, is it?' asked the shadow. —,,it's not even, huh?" he immediately answered himself with another question. —,,but it is, it is collected from the thresher's willow under the full moon." —,,i assume that something that only happens once every 100,000 years, according to the right conjunction of the planets."
—,,but of course it is." —,,and i bet you read it from that book, the description of the preparation of the broom." —,,yes from picatrix." —,,picnatrix, well, that's what i could have thought. what else could you be reading, right?" —,,i'm only reading what the previous owner left here."
"you mean the skeleton?" —,,yeah, look what she has in the library, where the shadow was reading in the diary." —,,the notes of henry cornell agrippa of nettesheim. he served as a factual model for the character of the legendary faust." —,,it's occult philosophy, i read it from the diary. he

also has volumes of the serpent of genesis, that's the key to black magic. then other things, the goetia, keys to the tarot, crowley's notes, also something from dion fortune, psychic self-defense . finally, karel sezemský, arbatel, and i could go on. the one who used to live here, and whose bones still reside here, was a book hunter." -,,ah! so now it makes sense to me. he knew too much, so he put a hole in his head." -,,maybe someone did it to him." -,,maybe in time we will find out how it really was. i have another task for you now, you have to put the brewhouse into operation. i guess employ the remaining witches in it." "how are they going to work for us?" -,,yes." -,,hahaha, and where can i find the witches?" "you're a witch yourself, don't you have any friends?" -,,organize a sabbath." -,,well, i've never organized it before. and where should i?" -,,up here above the city there is a great view from the hill." -,,okay, when the right conjunction comes, i will arrange it. until then, i'm going to try pentagrams in my room," the witch said goodbye to them for some time. soon after, sarahah held a witches' coven on the hill above the town. a lot of witches gathered here, and she offered them a job in the town's brewery. some of them accepted it. -,,the brewhouse is in operation again, this time for us," announced the witch when she returned to the house one night. -,,great, now we have to take over the local strip club," said a shadow from behind the book. -,,what?" -,,well, you charm their pimp and club owner." -,,why?" -,,because the city controls it here." -,,i see! and we have to control the city here?" -,,it's a condition of living here."

—,,Okay, well, I'll get back to work," announced the witch contritely. In her room, she was thinking of a plan on how to carry out the current task. She had to get a spell on the club owner and the pimp. She waited for the right conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn and then pitted them against each other in the ugliest way. Their own weaknesses that happened to be their strengths and also happened to be the objects that women were attracted to. In the second place, it was their monster that met them in life. Guns for one, drugs for the other. The drugged up pimp, he injected the armed club owner with a fatal dose of heroin right before he shot him. Now the whole business belonged only to strippers, and they jumped at the chance. The witch appeared to one of them in a mirror right after discovering the dead bodies of two powerful men. At that moment, the stripper realized that she was holding the reins of the night club, and so totalism took over the entire stripper business. This brought the witch Sarayan to her side a professional companion and a pole dance dancer. After returning home, where the shadow was reading the book of the master of the house, the diary. The shadow read aloud to her, and she found out that now all she had to do was get weapons on her side, but only with the right planets. She noticed a pile of other books tossed in a pile next to the blazing fireplace. The one on top was the framed Filia. "You have no respect for those books," she said to the shadow. —,,You're right," he replied and threw it and the other one he had read from the shelf straight into the fireplace. —,,Wait!" she walked over to the fireplace and took it in her hands and opened it. It was full of names and

amounts, dates. –,,what is it?" she was looking at her. the front page read solus. –,,what is it supposed to mean? –,,according to the newspaper, just some list of debtors, mainly politicians and rappers and businessmen." –,,oh, and what is it good for? –,,it's no use now, unless you get into it and curse all those names or something," laughed the shadow. –,,well, i could do that, but first it would be better to finish the task with the weapons. everything is fine. where is filius?"

–,,he's working on something down in the basement, that i know." –,,okay, i'll go look there," she said and did so. inside the cellar, icy liquids dripped from the ceiling. sarahah concluded that there was nowhere for the water to flow from above and so it must be condensed vapors from filius' laboratory. the gnome moved between the flasks and the steam. –,,ugh, what kind of stench is that?" she asked. "sulfur, don't you know that?" –,,is this sulfur? after all, it doesn't sting the nose." –,,yes, i managed to suppress what is so typical of sulfur through another extraction." at that the witch looked at the tip of her nose as if the gnome was tugging at it. –,,na, here i have something for you," he handed her the flask. –,,what is it?" she asked even more surprised. "acid, you'll need it," he told her. –,,what for?" –,,it will save you time. better not ask and go now," he replied. he did as he said. he doesn't have to wait for any conjunction with the caustic. she sneaked into the police station in the city and destroyed the lock to the ammunition warehouse with the help of caustic. when she replaces him, she will do it again and the only one who will be able to get in there

will be her. It is not for nothing that they say, if something needs to be said, leave it to the man. If something needs to be done, give the task to a woman. Or is it the other way around? Sarahah wasn't sure about that. But what she was sure of was that the city now belonged to a trio of mythical intelligences who, with the power of their malevolence, controlled the production of addictive substances, had the strongest influence on the strip club, controlled ammunition and weapons. She had a lot of chaos on her hands. Not just her, but the entire mystic gang, as they called themselves. She went back to that house on the edge of town that still had smoke coming from the chimney. It was not strange to anyone around. After all, its owner is dead, his skeleton is still sitting on the couch. The shadow of an unknown entity stands next to it and opens the last book from the shelf. There is a letter in it. I'm more than certain that the time has come for me to hand over the writing reins to someone younger. I have dedicated my life to this. Writing was my passion. I sacrificed as much as I could for it. Unfortunately, I burned out in my social and family life. All I felt I could give to the world were my books. The ones I had enough energy for I wrote down, but it is time to leave this position and the task to be completed by someone younger. I'm too old for that. I liked this world. To the younger generations, I hereby leave my legacy in the form of books, which should be burned, because they are mere figments of my imagination and should therefore also fulfill their second role, that is to unite society by destroying them. Sending one last kiss to the women I adored above all else. I hereby let all people and beings who have chosen

me as their enemy win and for them I exercise my right to be forgotten. Signed by Dominyk Alf himself. He put the letter down and turned to the first page of the last book on the shelf. I stared at this book for hours. Her rice paper leaves written in lowercase. It was a heavy book. With leather bound boards and several hundred pages. Each of them seemed to carry an important message that could not be destroyed even by the flames of hell, and yet was so threatened that a mere insensitive movement was enough to tear the thin page. There were a lot of such pages and it was difficult to glue them back together. So many torn out and only half pages that the whole work and its message remained somewhere unfinished. However, what I read in that book made me feel like an ordinary thinking person. The acquired knowledge shook my life to its foundations. My view of the world was changed forever. Shivers of insanity coursed through me like an electric current. First, anxiety tried to consume me, then darkness, and finally it has its own self-destructive existence. I burst out laughing at the last moment. There was no other way. The hideous laughter of the psychopaths trapped inside me. The grin of hideous buffoons and clowns and clowns warmed me inside. The laugh, the unnatural laugh that came out of my mouth, was inside my head. The chilling euphoria ran down my back, which was exactly as prominent as the bow from the view through my window. A cold wind howled at them, coming down the side of the hills into the saddle and then leaning against the brick walls of the house with full steam. It cracked in the rafters. A light flashed above my head and I was absolutely sure it was watching me. He sniffs around me and feels my

goosebumps with summer intimate touches. My irritated skin from inside my body. How they electrify the hairs on my arms. How the mushrooms in my fingers crunch when I straighten them, I can't help but feel it in them. The feeling of the energy emanating from my fingertips, which was filled with that book that I shouldn't have opened. I was drenched in icy sweat. My heart was racing. I couldn't even move as I was scared to death. I sat in the chair, exhausted by the night, and my limbs and head hung down lifelessly. Only darkness remained around me.

Then I gasped for air and coughed. I fell asleep. Have I slept in this chair for several hours? Or days? Something was wrong with me. Was it really me? I got up and started reaching around. My textiles, my body. That book? Where is? She disappeared. She was nowhere. Where did she go? The clock at the end of the room struck three in the morning. The damned time. The hour between the dog and the wolf. Now the supernatural forces have the most power. I felt trapped in an invisible and intangible cage of night and darkness that surrounded me. Only the flame of the candle that I decided to light was close to my body like a faithful dog to its handler. The thoughts that came to me were gnawing at my mind like rats on their invulnerable food somewhere in the depths of the sewers and cellars below ground level of the city. I grabbed my head. Oh the book, where is it? I looked around the room. She was not to be found. Did he who was at the heels of my knowledge take it away? Who was he anyway? A demon of power? Or perhaps myself? The wind again leaned against the walls of the house and I looked back out the window. I

saw a figure fleeing through the archway. was she a sylph, an ethereal female creature of the wind element, or perhaps an undana? undine? unfortunately, i have agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces did not allow me to go outside to explore the scene. instead, i retired to my study to record this nocturne. nocturnal inspiration, i can, that circulated in my brain coils. i couldn't get enough of her, even though she scared me to my core. my eyes glowed in the candlelight at the sight of my manuscript you are currently reading, like the eyes of a nocturnal animal, a raptor, or other nocturnal, dark-seeing creatures. my own capture of the inflagrante, of myself in the act, has such an effect on me. the hyper real observation when i catch myself writing this right now. but after that i want to devote myself to something else. this time i should know how saint dominic intended it. i should wear the black robes worn in the first half of the twelfth century. although i could probably wear gray as his namesake. come on, i have black. but over time i wear it and wash it and then it turns gray. anyway, my ancestor already wrote the book malleus maletiarum. in translation – witch's hammer. handle for destroying evil. however, it was only issued by the dominican order in the fifteenth century. after the death of my ancestor. until then, it was used only unofficially. after its release, however, relations broke down, which then led to more whistle-blowing.

paradoxically, even my namesake saint dominic burned the books of strangers. but no one allowed himself to heat his book with heat. until the hussites gave a fuck about only what was true. i wish them the best, they were our people

and our family went by their side. At least for a while before the tension subsided, because that's how it goes in the Czech lands. I love looking at the cards no less. Tarots, as well as symbolon. They are called taroky in Moravia. In Bohemia, they are simply called mariášky – the ones who always played devils in fairy tales, for example in Fimfárr. But tarok also means trump. I'm playing tarot, so I'm going to play it upstairs in my room. I will be happy to write down my interpretation. It has a special effect on me. Each card has its own story. The more I look at them and discover more and more details that fascinate me and that I can carry in my heart. But with this knowledge I was convinced that I was a budding mystic. But it wasn't the only thing I had ambitions for. I'm also well versed in astrology, so I'll go look through my telescope at the stars – the night sky fascinates me so much that I write down my findings regarding the effect of the universe on the human psyche. I understood this very much after reading the writings of Avraham Barchij. He was the first person in the Middle Ages to write down his philosophical, mathematical and astrological findings in Hebrew. Thanks to this, it got into Latin and then into Slovak and thus into today's Czech. So I'm going to take a look around my notebook astroglobe at my library where I have some books on the banned book list. Index librorum prohibitorum. I reach for my notebook from which you are reading now and see that All Souls' Day is on the calendar. Now the events around me fit into one mosaic and everything presented its meaning. I have to go out. I saw a clock on the wall next to a painting by Albrecht Dürer, a German painter who spent his life trying to

match Leonardo da Vinci. It is now a quarter to three in the morning. Right time to go. I take the cloak in my hand and put it on. Is perfect. He looks at a painting by Bosch for a while. He was different from me as the second only child out of eighteen children. And maybe he was a homosexual., which I only resorted to as a woman, maybe that's why I'm alone a lot of the time. But sleeping with a woman does not mean having sex with her right away. It is enough to sleep next to her in bed even without intercourse. It is common knowledge that every woman is prettier and more beautiful after sex, but unfortunately, if there is no spark between them, even the greatest hidden passion will not bring them together. Sex is something that I abhor in part. In order to be able to lay waste to someone, I have to have complete trust in that person.

A cedar grove grew outside. My great—grandfather planted it. Inside him was a place that I felt was an engregor. A place containing the magical sap of knowledge and experience. Astral formation of the energy—information field. At least that's how the occult defined him. But I tell you, from experience, that it can also be a place chosen as suitable for angels to land in between. At least that's how I used to feel that I was conversing with these messengers between men and gods. Sometimes only in spirit, in my mind. Sometimes I even saw them, but I still only had their voice inside me. I think that's just how angels are. Impressive. I don't know why, but every time I came back from the grove through the back garden where my ancestors practiced fencing, I often remembered how my uncle once told about visiting Prague there. About

THE SO—CALLED LANTERN MAGIC. ABOUT THE FIRST MULTIMEDIA THEATER IN THE WORLD. ALSO CALLED SYNTHETIC THEATER. AT THAT TIME, UNTIL MY PERSONAL SETTING, I DID NOT KNOW THAT THE THEATER WAS THE NATIONAL THEATER ITSELF AND A NEW STAGE, WHICH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SPRINGBOARD FOR BUDDING NATIONAL ARTISTS IN ALL DIRECTIONS. ESPECIALLY IN THE NEW ONES. THEN, TOO, I EXPERIENCED A PERFORMANCE IMPROVISED BY THE REGULARS OF THIS PLACE. I WOULD CALL THEM STREET ACTORS. BUT NOW CAME THE MOMENT WHEN I FELT THE DEMON AGAIN. A DEMON OF POWER FOR HIS UNFULFILLED WISHES. I WAS POSSESSED BY MANY DEMONS IN MY YOUTH. I WAS FAMILIAR WITH ALL SEVEN DEADLY SINS. AFTER SOME TIME OF REALIZATION, AN EIGHTH DEMON FELL ON ME FOR THAT — THE DEMON OF POWER. HOWEVER, NOT EVERYTHING BAD IS GOOD FOR SOMETHING. ALL THE SEVEN SINS LIKE PRIDE, GREED, ENVY, ANGER, FORNICATION, GLUTTONY, SLOTH, ALL OF THEM NAMELY LUCIFER, LEVIATHAN, SATAN, ASMODEUS, BEELZEBUB, BELPHEGOR I HAVE EXCHANGED FOR THE ONE DEMON OF POWER THAT HAS NOT YET BEEN NAMED. ONLY WITH HIM DID HUMILITY APPEAR IN ME AND I BEGAN TO FAST. SIN HAS BECOME A MISTAKE FOR ME. BY INSULTING THE DEITIES. EVEN THOUGH I WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN, SOMETHING INSIDE ME TOLD ME THAT I WAS NOT DOING WELL. THAT DEMON OF POWER MANIFESTED ITSELF IN MY ADDICTION TO DRUGS. THE CONSUMPTION OF NARCOTIC SUBSTANCES IS NOT PROHIBITED ANYWHERE. IT WAS BECAUSE I WAS INTERESTED IN OCCULT BOOKS AND DEMONOLOGY, AND AS A NON—BELIEVER THOMAS, I DID NOT PRACTICE THESE THEURGIES. I JUST READ ABOUT IT. GOD ALMIGHTY HIMSELF HAS GIFTED ME WITH SUCH A FEELING. AFTER TAKING THE DRUG, I STOPPED LOOKING FOR FORNICATION AND OTHER MISTAKES. HUMAN AND KIND COMPANY WAS ENOUGH FOR ME. INSTEAD OF ANGER, I BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT THE QUESTIONS THAT NATURAL

instinct raises. For example, overpopulation, destruction of the environment, race of people among themselves and with themselves. The loss of feelings and similar topics, which were analyzed by Mr. K. Lorenz. Thanks to this, I knew how I wanted to proceed further, and that was to create something completely new in my vision that would appeal to as many people as possible.

I started to believe in myself. My egotistical exterior had no doubt that he could one day write a syncretistic bible. And that in two ways, Chinese, that is, global – connecting all religions into one and then another, inventing own and new ones. But only now did I understand that I can practice invocations with angels. According to the angelic zodiac. These moments finally gave me what I longed for – complete enlightenment. Thanks to which I was then able to continue with my current life and to continue to write. I was doing well. However, I believed, as I convinced myself, that one inherits many genes from one's great–ancestors rather than one's parents. That's why I got along the most with my grandson, despite the fact that we were different in many things because of the generation gap – that is, age and time. We thought form. Above all, he motivated me to complete my journey of knowledge by reading secret documents and books, so that he no longer had to do it. In the end, however, I found out only one thing – it's all just fiction. It's always better to come up with something of your own. That's why I wrote my diaries for many years, which preserved my vision of the world around me even after my death. Here I chose the one that belonged to me. I drilled a hole in my forehead with a manual machine to let my soul out. I made the machine

myself. It was written about in some online book from Digital Wave. Basically, a modern-day cult movie. By succeeding in completing this death, I will release my soul here into the premises of my house, which can handle itself. With a sufficiently high probability, the one who so tormented my soul during my lifetime will materialize from it – the unnamed demon of power itself. He will help the ghosts settle here and then he will fulfill his part of the deal and I will be able to rest in peace. Signed by Domynyk Alf himself."

–,,What? So the skeleton is Domynyk Alf?" the gnome wondered. –,,Yes, and I am the demon of power," said the shadow in a low voice with undisguised astonishment. –,,Hey come here," suggested the witch and pointed to the scale. The shadow moved over her. –,,See, only 23 grams. The human soul weighs so much." –,,So does that mean I'm going to purgatory?' he was afraid of the shadow. –,,No, we still have work to do," reminded the witch and pulled out a thin book full of debtors' names from under her coat.

DRAGON TALE

A FIRE WAS BURNING AROUND. THE FLAMES SHOT HIGH, CARESSING THE FACES OF THE PEOPLE STANDING AROUND. I ROSE FROM THE ASHES LIKE A PHOENIX. DIRTY, DISORIENTED. I FINALLY STRAIGHTENED UP. I WAS SPOTTED IN MY SIZE. -„ANOTHER OF US HAS RISEN. LET'S WELCOME HIM," SAID A DEEP VOICE. MEAD SPILLED INTO THE CHAINED CORNERS. I EMERGED FROM THE HELL OF FIERY WAVES IN WHICH I WAS BORN. -„INTRODUCE YOURSELF YOUNG WARRIOR." "MY NAME IS ALFRED THE DRAGON SLAYER," I DID AS HE WANTED. I GOT A LAUGH IN RESPONSE. -„YOU'RE TOO THIN FOR A DRAGON SLAYER, AND YOUR FACE DOESN'T SHOW ANY SIGNS OF STRUGGLE." -„DON'T BE FOOLED WIGLAF. THERE IS A DESTINY IN A NAME." ADDRESSED, WIGLAF

GROWLED BUT SPOKE TO THE WISE FELLOW. -„SOME MINESENGR WILL SPOIL OUR MORALE WITH HIS LUTE. I CAN ALREADY SEE HIM KNOCKING SOME DRAGON TO THE GROUND WITH THAT FIDDLE." -„IF WE GIVE HIM A CHANCE, HE WOULD DEFINITELY KNOCK HIS HEAD OFF WITH JUST STRINGS. YOU'RE FORGETTING WE'RE DRAGON SLAYERS!" "EXACTLY, LANCELOT," NODDED THE MAN IN THE ORNATE ROBES. -„WELL MINESENGRE, LET'S SEE HOW MANY DRAGONS YOU CAN DEFEAT IN THE END," SAID THE MAN. I REMAINED SILENT AND STEPPED AWAY FROM THE FIRE CLOSER TO THE LANDING FACES AROUND ME. -„ I AM AFRAID, SAINT GEORGE, THAT YOU HAVE MADE A MISTAKE BEFORE YOUR GOD. THIS IS NO DRAGON SLAYER!" THE ONE CALLED WIGLAF CALLED OUT AGAIN. -„I MAY HAVE MADE A MISTAKE, YES, BUT GOD IS NEVER WRONG. HE SENT THE YOUNG MAN HERE FOR SOME REASON. JUST LIKE EACH OF US." THE GOLDEN ROBED MAN ANSWERED. -„MAY I KNOW WHERE I FOUND MYSELF?" I ASKED. -„IN REFUGIO. DRAGON

SLAYER SANCTUARY," A DEEP VOICE ANSWERED ME. I WAS SILENT ON THAT. I NOTICED THAT THERE WERE FACES FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. -„YOU ARE NOT THE FIRST PERSON THE UNIVERSE SENT US HERE, AKASHA. DEPENDING ON WHAT YOUR BACKGROUND IS. YOUR ARKHAI, SO ACCORDINGLY WE ARE YOUR MASTERS, AND ACCORDINGLY YOU SHALL ALSO FACE YOUR NEMESIS - ADVERSARY." A KNIGHT CALLED LANCELOT SPOKE TO ME. -„WHO WILL BE MY NEMESIS?" I ASKED SO FOOLISHLY. THE SIMPLE ANSWER RESONATED WITH ME. -„DRAGON."

THEY ACCOMMODATED ME IN A LARGE ROOM IN A GIANT BUILDING AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN. THE WHOLE POSITION WAS SOMEWHERE HIGH UP IN THE VAST MOUNTAINS. I TRIED TO REMEMBER HOW I GOT HERE BUT I DIDN'T REALLY KNOW ANYTHING. I WAS LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW AT HOW IT WAS SNOWING AND THE SNOW WAS PILING UP ON THOSE ICY CLIFFS. I WAS FASCINATED BY THE IDEA OF AN AVALANCHE BREAKING OUT AND COVERING THE ENTIRE BUILDING. WHAT WOULD

HAPPEN THEN? IT WAS A CLEAR NIGHT WHEN I ROSE HERE FROM THE ASHES. I DIDN'T WANT TO SLEEP ANYMORE. I LOOKED AT THE STARS UNTIL DAWN. IN THE MOUNTAINS IT WAS BEAUTIFULLY CLOSE TO HEAVEN. THE SKY, ALSO CALLED AKASHA, WAS FULL OF CONSTELLATIONS FROM THE LITTLE AND BIG DIPPER, I GOT TO THE POLARIS, TO ORION AND THEN TO ALPHA DRACONIS, THE BRIGHTEST STAR OF THE DRAGON CONSTELLATION. UNTIL THE SUN DROVE HIM OUT OF THE SKY. THE DOOR BEHIND ME OPENED AND THE ROBED MAN STOOD IN IT. MAZETTA COVERED HIS SHOULDERS WITH HER BROCADE FORM, LIKEWISE HIS CLERICAL WAS GOLDEN IN COLOR. -„COME EAT BREAKFAST, DRAGON SLAYER," HE SAID. I SILENTLY WATCHED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT. THE CORD AROUND HIS WAIST, THE CINGULUM, WAS UNTIED. HE LOWERED HIS HEAD TO GET A GOOD LOOK AT HER SO HE COULD TIE HER UP AGAIN. THUS REVEALING A SHAVED HEAD, CONSUL. HE LOOKED LIKE A MONK, BUT WITH TURKISH FEATURES. "I KNOW WHO YOU ARE," I SAID. THE MAN ROLLED HIS EYES AT WHAT WOULD COME OUT OF ME.

-„YOU ARE ST. GEORGE, THE MOST FAMOUS DRAGON SLAYER." THE MAN FROZE. -„NO, WE ARE VERY FAMOUS," HE SAID WITH A SMILE. -„I WILL EXPLAIN EVERYTHING TO YOU NOW," HE SAID AND LED ME INTO THE CORRIDOR. -„FOR YOU ARE FROM CENTRAL EUROPE, I, SAINT GEORGE, WIGLAF AND LANCELOT WILL BE YOUR MASTERS. OF COURSE THERE ARE A HUGE NUMBER OF US HERE. DRAGON SLAYERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD GATHER HERE - IN THE REFUGIO. THE SCHEDULE FOR YOUR DRAGON SLAYER TRAINING WILL BE AS FOLLOWS, EVERY MORNING AFTER BREAKFAST WARM-UP ON THE KOLBE FIELD. THIS IS OUTSIDE THE REFUGE BUILDING. AFTER THAT, YOU WILL STAY AT THE RINK FOR ONE DAY AND EXERCISE YOUR BODY. ON THE SECOND DAY YOU WILL HAVE STUDIES, WE WILL EXERCISE YOUR MIND, AND ON THE THIRD DAY LANCELOT WILL TRAIN YOUR SKILLS WITH WEAPONS. THEN EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL OVER AGAIN. IS IT CLEAR TO YOU?" I REMAINED SILENT AS A SIGN OF APPROVAL.

I DIDN'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THE BOOKS. I FELT SOME KIND OF BROKEN POET'S SPIRIT IN

ME. BUT WHAT DID THEY PREPARE FOR ME AT THE KOLBIŠTE? WIGLAF AND LANCELOT WERE STANDING THERE LAUGHING HEARTILY AT SOMETHING. "THE POET IS ALREADY HERE." I HEARD THEIR VAIN REMARKS. -„COME ON YOUNG MAN, DO TWENTY PUSH-UPS, SIT-UPS AND EIGHT CARTWHEELS AROUND THE TRAINING GROUND," ORDERED WIGLAF. I DID ALL THIS IN SILENCE FOR SEVERAL TENS OF MINUTES. THEN HE WORKED ME TO EXHAUSTION AGAIN, SEVERAL HOURS AT A TIME. -„ YOU ARE THIN! DO YOU WANT THAT DRAGON TO BITE YOU?" HE SCREAMED. -„AND NOW WHEN YOU'RE DONE, YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A GOOD TIME. EAT WHAT YOU CAN AND THEN AGAIN. THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW WE WILL CONTINUE," HE SMILED IN HIS BEARD AND IT WAS ALREADY GETTING DARK BEHIND HIS BROAD SHOULDERS. HALF DEAD, I SHUFFLED TO THE DINING ROOM OF THE GRAND HALL WHERE ALL THE DRAGON SLAYERS WERE FEASTING TOGETHER. I GOT A LOT OF MONEY. I ATE AND I LISTENED. -„STOORWORM WAS UNIMAGINABLY LARGE. HE HAD THOSE JAGGED JAWS OPEN WIDE ENOUGH

TO SWALLOW AN ENTIRE TOWN OR VILLAGE. AND IMAGINE THE DANGER I WAS IN." -„DON'T REPEAT IT, WE'VE ALREADY HEARD IT A HUNDRED TIMES." -„LOOK, AND YOUR DRAGON HUNTING, ISN'T IT? A PIECE OF THE LONG TABLE BEGAN TO LAUGH, FOLLOWED BY OTHERS AND OTHERS. EACH GROUP TO ITS OWN ADVANTAGE. TO STORIES ABOUT HUNTING DRAGONS. -„WHEN HE SWALLOWED ME, I DIVED AS FAST AS I COULD. THEN I LIT THE PEAT AND IT STARTED BANGING IN THE DRAGON! THE DRAGON WAS TORN APART FROM THE INSIDE!" -„TO DRAGON SLAYER JAMMIE!" THEY DRANK AND FEASTED. I ATE TWICE IN A ROW BEYOND USEFUL SATIETY, AND THEN WENT TO MY CHAMBER. I COULDN'T SLEEP ALL NIGHT, SO I KEPT LOOKING AT THE STARS. IN THE MORNING IN THE WOODEN BENCH I STARED AT THE PRISONER FROM THE BOOKS IN FRONT OF ME. I WAS SITTING THERE ALONE, AS ALWAYS. THE ONLY DISCIPLE AND THE ONLY MASTER - SAINT GEORGE. -„HAD, NAHASH IN HEBREW, HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE POWER OF EVIL AND CHAOS FROM THE UNDERWORLD, BUT ALSO OF THE FERTILITY OF LIFE AND HEALING.

SNAKES EATING EACH OTHER'S TAILS SYMBOLIZE THE CYCLE OF ETERNAL REPETITION, AND OUR TEACHING WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE SAME WAY," HE SAID. ON THE BLACKBOARD HE HAD A STRETCHED OUT PICTURE OF A DRAGON WITH PARTS OF ITS BODY DIVIDED. ST. GEORGE POINTED AT IT WITH HIS WAND AND READ PARTS OF IT ALOUD.

-„UPPER TAIL, LOWER TAIL, THIGH, THIGH, HIND PAWS, CHEST, FLANK, TENDERLOIN, RIBS, WINGS, CHUCK, BREAST, HOCK, SHOULDERS, FRONT PAWS, NECK AND HEAD. AND NOW YOU TELL ME," HE NODDED AT ME WITH HIS CHIN. "I KNOW WHY YOU'RE NOT HERE IN ARMOR LIKE EVERYONE ELSE," I SAID. SAINT GEORGE WAS TAKEN ABACK BY MY REACTION. -„YOU MAY HAVE SLAIN THE DRAGON, BUT YOU YOURSELF DIED AS A MARTYR TO CHRISTIANITY. I REMEMBER READING ABOUT YOU, WAY BACK BEFORE MY AWAKENING HERE." -„OKAY BOY. I'LL LEAVE YOU HERE TO STUDY NOW AND GO OUT FOR A WALK MYSELF. I'LL TEST YOU WHEN I COME." HE TRIED TO HIDE HIS SUDDENLY AWAKENED FURY. I READ HIS FACE LIKE AN OPEN BOOK. HE RAN

OUT OF THE CLASSROOM. I HEARD HIM CURSING IN A LOW VOICE ON THE WAY DOWN THE HALL. BEHIND ME WAS THE ENTRANCE TO THE LIBRARY. I TOOK THE HANDLE BUT IT WAS LOCKED. SO I WENT BACK TO THE BOOKS I HAD TO GO THROUGH. THEY WERE UNTITLED, WRITTEN IN A TRACT STYLE THAT WAS UTTERLY INDESCRIBABLY DULL. THE FOLIOS WERE FILLED WITH SOMETHING ABOUT THE PARABLE OF THE FIGHT WITH THE DRAGON AND THE LITURGY. ACTUALLY, IT WAS A LITURGY OF A FIGHT WITH A DRAGON. UNDOUBTEDLY THERE WERE SOME CEREMONIES. FIGHTING A DRAGON ISN'T JUST THAT. IT'S AN HONOR. ALL OF THESE TOMES IN FRONT OF ME WERE UNDOUBTEDLY WRITTEN BY SOME DRAGON SLAYING CLERIC. IN ADDITION, ALL WRITTEN IN LOWER CASE. A FONT THAT WAS HARD TO DECIPHER LET ALONE READ. I PREFERRED TO LOOK AT THE TAPESTRY ON THE WALL WITH THE PARTS OF THE DRAGON WRITTEN ON IT. UNTIL SHE MADE SENSE TO ME. THEN I WALKED OUT OF THE CLASSROOM. AN ELDERLY MAN WAS JUST WALKING DOWN THE CORRIDOR. "HELLO," I

GREETED HIM. THE MAN WAS FROM A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT CULTURE THAN ME, SO HE JUST GESTURED WITH A SMILE. AFTER PASSING BY ME, HE ALSO WENT OUT. A SYCAMORE TREE GREW IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING. I PLUCKED HER CROP AND ATE HER FLESH. THEN, HIDING BEHIND A TREE, I SAW ST. GEORGE TALKING WITH WIGLAF AND LANCELOT. -„THAT CHEEKY BOY DOESN'T HAVE ANY SENSE OF JUDGMENT OR AN IOTA OF GOOD MANNERS! HE KEEPS LOOKING AT ME LIKE HE'S READING ME. I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG WE CAN LAST WITH SOMETHING LIKE THIS." THE OTHER TWO WERE AMUSED AT FIRST. -„I'M BEGGING YOU, WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU EXPECT FROM A JUNKER!" HE UNDERESTIMATED WIGLAF. "DON'T WORRY SAINT GEORGE, WE'LL TAKE HIM TO THE SHOW," SAID LANCELOT. I WAITED FOR ST. GEORGE TO PASS BY AND CLIMBED OUT FROM BEHIND THE FIG TREE. -„I AM ASKING TO ENTER THE LIBRARY!" I IMPOSED MY PLEAS UPON HIM RADICALLY. HE WAS ALMOST HIT BY A SLAG WHEN I JUMPED ON HIM. OUT OF BREATH, HE SENT ME TO DINNER AND RAN AWAY HIMSELF.

THAT NIGHT I LOOKED AT THE STARS AGAIN. THE NEXT DAY, EARLY IN THE MORNING, I HAD TRAINING WITH LANCELOT. HE WAS DRESSED IN A LEATHER TUNIC. "WELL, HERE ARE THE SWORD AND THE PUMICE STONE, I WANT TO SEE YOU SHARPEN THE SWORD," HE SAID. I KNELT DOWN AND SHARPENED THE OUTSIDE OF THE SWORD WITH A EMBER THAT WAS VERY POROUS TO THE TOUCH. -„WELL SEE, AT LEAST YOU'RE GOOD AT SOMETHING, IF NOT LEARNING." I STARED AT HIM FOR A LONG TIME. -„SAINT GEORGE TOLD ME ABOUT YOU THAT YOU ARE VERY UNDISCIPLINED. YOU SHOULD TREAT HIM WITH MORE RESPECT." I NODDED SILENTLY. -„NOW, HERE ARE THE TARGETS, A SMALL SHIELD, AND SHOW ME SOME MOVES WITH IT. I GRIPPED HIS LEFT HAND FIRMLY AND SHOWED HIM THE FIGHTING STANCE I FELT I SHOULD DO. -„SO, ONE LEG MORE FORWARD SO THAT YOU HAVE THE CENTER OF GRAVITY IN THE PELVIS. LEGS, ARE YOU SURE? AND NOW I WANT TO SEE THE SWING." I WAVED MY SWORD HAND IN FRONT OF ME. -„OKAY, YOU SHOULD JUST GET USED TO THE WEIGHT OF THE SWORD. AND

WHEN YOU SWING THE SWORD, RETURN IT BACK TO THE POSITION HERE," HE ADVISED ME. AFTER THAT, I TRAINED FOR SEVERAL HOURS STRAIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RINK. GROUPS OF SETTLERS OF THE VAST HOUSE IN THE MOUNTAINS CALLED THE REFUGE CAME TO LOOK AT ME. THEY DIDN'T MIND ME, BUT THE TRAINING EXHAUSTED ME ENORMOUSLY. I REALLY OVERATE THAT EVENING IN THE DINING ROOM. -„YOU TAUGHT HIM WELL WITH THE LANCELOT SWORD!" THEY EXCLAIMED AS MY MASTER CAME INTO THE BANQUET HALL. -„THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING!" HE ANSWERED. HE CAME TO ME AND SPOKE. -„WE WILL HEAR WHAT LEGENDARY FIGHT ALFRED THE DRAGON SLAYER HIMSELF WILL EVENTUALLY WAGE." AT THIS THERE WAS A TUMULT OF MEAD TOASTS FROM THE CHISELED HORNS. -„AND WHAT WAS YOUR STORY, LANCELOT?" SOMEONE ASKED. -„YOU'VE ALL HEARD IT SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE." -„YES, BUT NOT THE YOUNG ONES. -„WELL, THEN, FOR YOU, DRAGON SLAYER.
I WAS RAISED BY A LAKE FAIRY AND AT THE AGE OF FIFTEEN I WENT OUT INTO THE WORLD

TO EXPERIENCE. ALL I GOT ON HER WAS A SWORD. I WAS UNBEATABLE IN BATTLE AND BECAME ONE OF THE MAIN KNIGHTS OF KING ARTHUR'S ROUND TABLE. BUT ANOTHER THING HAPPENED THAT GOT ME INTO TROUBLE. I FELL IN LOVE WITH THE WIFE OF THE KING HIMSELF - GINEVRA. THE KING FOUND OUT AND DECIDED TO SEND ME ON A VERY DANGEROUS EXPEDITION, WHERE I ENCOUNTERED A DRAGON. IT WAS A BLACK SLED." -„YOU'RE THE WORST," COMMENTED ONE OF THE DRAGON SLAYERS NEAR ME. -„IT WAS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE JUNGLE BY A CAVE WITH A LAKE. THE BEAST SPAT CAUSTIC SALIVA AROUND IT. THE ACID CORRODED MY SOLDIERS, BUT FOR NOW I WAS ABLE TO SNEAK UP TO A STRONG TREE, WHICH I CLIMBED AND THEN JUMPED OFF ONTO THE DRAGON'S BACK. A SWORD STRAIGHT FOR THE NECK! THE MONSTER WAS ROARING! A. . . THEN . . . SHE DIED." HE STOPPED SLOWLY IN HIS NARRATIVE LANCELOT. SILENCE PERMEATED THE BANQUET HALL, BUT ONLY FOR A SECOND. AFTER THAT THERE WERE CHEERS AND TOASTS. TWO MEN TOOK HIM ABOVE THE HEADS OF THE

LEAPERS, AND HE REJOICED THERE IN THE PEAKS. I FINISHED MY MEAL AND WENT TO MY ROOM. I LOOKED AT THE STARS. CONSTELLATION DRAGON. I'VE BEEN HERE FOR THREE DAYS ALREADY. A NEW THREE-DAY WEEK STARTS TOMORROW. DAY ONE - TRAINING WITH WIGLAF. DAY TWO - LEARNING WITH ST. GEORGE. DAY THREE - TRAINING WITH LANCELOT. AND THEN A NEW WEEK AND THE SAME THING AGAIN. I LOOKED AT THE TOPS OF THE ROCKS AROUND AND FANTASIZED IF THERE WAS A CAVE WITH A DRAGON SOMEWHERE THAT I COULD GO AND ATTACK. BUT I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT OR SEE ANY. SO I KEPT LOOKING AT THE STARS. THAT DREADED CONSTELLATION OF THE DRAGON. IN THE MORNING AFTER BREAKFAST I WENT TO TRAIN WITH WIGLAF. HE SHOUTED ORDERS AT ME AGAIN, WHICH I HAD TO COMPLY WITH WILLY-NILLY. -„WIGLAF," I ADDRESSED HIM BREATHLESSLY TO THE GLOOM. -„I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW YOUR STORY AS WELL," I SAID. -„YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT SUCH A LEARNED POET IF YOU DON'T KNOW MY NAME," HE LOOKED AT ME CURSED. "I AM THE NEPHEW OF THE FAMOUS

BEOWULF," HE SPOKE. I ROLLED MY EYES. -„AFTER KILLING GRENDEL AND HIS MOTHER, THOSE TWO HIDEOUS CREATURES, HE BECAME KING. HE WAS UNTIL HIS LAST BREATH. HOWEVER, A RED-SCALED DRAGON APPEARED IN THE LAND EVEN AFTER THAT. HE SPEWED FIRE. IT HAD RED TO RED-ORANGE COLORED SCALES AND MEASURED AROUND 25 METERS. HE HAD TO INJURE HIMSELF IN ORDER TO KILL HIM, BUT UNFORTUNATELY ENDED UP IN HIS FLAMES. AT THAT MOMENT, HOWEVER, I GAVE THE DRAGON A FATAL BLOW AND IT WENT AWAY. THAT'S HOW I BECAME A FOLLOWER OF THE THRONE," HE CONCLUDED HIS STORY BRIEFLY.

I WAS SILENT. ALL THIS EXPLAINED WHY SHE WAS WEARING SUCH A MAGNIFICENT TUNIC AND ALSO A TIARA, A CROWN STUDDED WITH DIADEMS. SO I WENT TO HAVE DINNER. -„LISTEN DRAGON SLAYERS, I AM JOHN LAMBTON AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE MY STORY WITH YOU," HE BEGAN AT FIRST. -„ONCE I WAS FISHING LIKE THIS AND I CAUGHT SUCH A SMALL SNAKE. HE HAD DARK SCALY SKIN. HE LOOKED PRETTY HARMLESS AND I ACTUALLY THOUGHT HE WAS

CUTE. SO I THREW HIM INTO THE WELL ON OUR HILLFORT. OVER TIME, I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT HIM AND WENT ON AN EXPEDITION TO THE HOLY LAND. WHEN I CAME BACK, THE WHOLE CASTLE WAS UNDER SIEGE BY THAT WURM! I HAD COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN WHAT SUCH A WORM COULD GROW INTO. IT TURNED GREEN AND GREW TO INCREDIBLE PROPORTIONS THE LONGER IT LIVED THERE. HE WAS POISONOUS, HE HAD CHLORINE BREATH. ALL THE PLANTS IN THE AREA WITHERED AND THE GRASS DRIED UP. HE GUARDED HIS TERRITORY OF MY STRONGHOLD WITH IT. WHAT DID I NAIVELY EXPECT? THAT SCHEMER HAS TAKEN OVER MY HOME. HE WAS SECRETIVE AND AFRAID TO FIGHT, BUT WHERE HE COULD EAT SOMETHING OR SOMEONE UNNOTICED, YES! HE DID IT! I HAD TO STEP IN. FOR YEARS BEFORE I RETURNED, THE CHILDREN FROM MY HILLFORT HAD TO SACRIFICE THE MILK OF OUR COWS, SO THAT AT LEAST SOMETHING WOULD FILL HIS STOMACH AND THEREBY LIMIT THE NUMBER OF HIS VICTIMS. I LOOKED FOR A WITCH, SHE ADVISED ME TO TAKE ARMOR FROM HER. IT

WAS COMPLETELY COVERED WITH A BLADE AND FLASHED BEAUTIFULLY. BUT SHE DIDN'T WANT TO PAY FOR IT. SHE SAID IT WAS CURSED AND IF SHE PUT IT ON, I MUST KILL NOT ONLY THE DRAGON, BUT ALSO THE FIRST CREATURE I MEET AFTER FIGHTING THE DRAGON. THE URGENCY OF THE SITUATION DROVE ME TO THE POINT WHERE I KNEW I HAD TO REACT AND SO I SLIPPED INTO IT WITHOUT THINKING MUCH ABOUT HOW IT WOULD ALL TURN OUT. I SET OUT TO FIGHT THE WURM. IT WAS ALREADY SO ENORMOUS AND HUGE THROUGHOUT THE CASTLE THAT IT WAS ENOUGH TO OPEN A CELLAR AND A PART OF THE WURMA STARTED THERE. I SLASHED AT HIM IN PLACES WHERE I COULD UNTIL I PROVOKED HIM TO SUCH AGGRESSION THAT HE STUCK HIS HEAD OUT. SHE WATCHED OVER THE ENTIRE CASTLE. I RAN OUT TO MEET THAT EPIC BEAST - THE LAMBTON WURM. I ATTACKED HIM IN THE GROUND FLOOR, BECAUSE HE WAS FIVE METERS THICK AND TEN METERS HIGH. IN THE NEXT MOMENT HE ATTACKED TOO. HE SWALLOWED ME. LUCKILY, THAT'S WHY I HAD THE ARMOR.

IT CUT HIM OPEN, BOTH IN HIS MOUTH AND ALL OVER HIS BODY FROM THE INSIDE. WITH THAT HE SQUEALED AND I CUT MY WAY OUT OF HIM. EVERYONE WAS CELEBRATING AND WANTED TO CONVERGE ON ME, LED BY MY FATHER, BECAUSE I FORGOT TO TELL THEM THAT THE ARMOR WAS CURSED. I TRIED IN VAIN TO ESCAPE THEM. THEY CAUGHT UP WITH ME, BUT WHEN THEY NOTICED THE BLADE ON HIM, THEY PREFERRED TO GIVE UP THE HUG. I WAS UNABLE TO KILL ANYONE ELSE AND SO MY FAMILY WAS CURSED FOR SEVEN GENERATIONS AS THE WITCH HAD PREDICTED. NO ONE IN THE FAMILY FOUND THE TREASURE OF THE DRAGON I SLAYED THE HERO," JOHN LAMBTON ENDED HIS STORY REGRETFULLY. -„AND YOU SEE, YET YOU ARE HERE WITH US DRAGON SLAYER!" ONE OF THEM CALLED OUT AROUND US AND TOOK HIM BY THE SHOULDERS AND DRANK THE OTHER TO ALL THE PROUD DRAGON SLAYERS. THIS CHEERED UP JOHN LAMBTON AND HE DRANK TOO. I DIDN'T SLEEP ALL NIGHT AGAIN. I SEARCHED THE NIGHT SKY FOR A DRAGON. AND THEN I HEARD IT AND EVEN SAW IT. IN THE

DARKNESS BELOW THE MOUNTAIN TOPS I SAW SOME RUMBLING WITH SMALL EXPLOSIONS. AND I ALSO JUST NOW NOTICED THAT THE SOUNDS OF FUJAR, BASS PIPES ARE FIGHTING THE WIND OUTSIDE. I MOVED THE WINDOW FRAME AND WAS IMMEDIATELY HIT IN THE FACE BY A SNOWFLAKE ON THE TIP OF A WIND SLAP MIXED WITH A WIND INSTRUMENT. I STUCK MY HEAD OUT OF THE WINDOW EVEN MORE. I REALIZED THAT THERE WAS A STAGGERING CHASM BELOW ME, AND I WAS TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF THE BAY WINDOW. I PREFERRED TO CLOSE THE WINDOW AGAIN AND LOOK AT THE STARS. BUT THIS TIME I DIDN'T SEE THE DRAGON CONSTELLATION. THE NEXT MORNING, I HAD A STUDY WITH ST. GEORGE. -„EVEN IN THE BIBLE ITSELF, THREE NEGATIVE CHARACTERS APPEARED. IT WAS SATAN, LILITH AND...," HE EXPECTED MY PROPER ANSWER, AFTER WHICH I JUST REMAINED SILENT. -„...AND A DRAGON," HE ANSWERED AFTER ME. -„WELL, WE DIVIDE THE TYPES OF DRAGONS ACCORDING TO THE AREA WHERE THEY ARE FOUND. ASIA IS DIVIDED INTO CHINA AND JAPAN. THEN THE DRAGONS OF THE

MIDDLE EAST AND THE FRONT OF ASIA, EUROPEAN DRAGONS, AMERICAN - NORTHERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN. AFRICA AND OCEANIA," HE POINTED TO THE WORLD MAP WITH A WAND. -„AND NOW THE INDIVIDUAL SPECIES," HE MOVED THE TIP OF THE WAND TO THE VARIOUS TAPESTRIES MARKED BY WHICH TERRITORY THE DRAGON SPECIES DIFFER. "SAINT GEORGE," I ADDRESSED HIM BEFORE HE COULD CONTINUE. -„WURM IS A LIMBLESS DRAGON?" I ASKED.

HE SMILED. -„WELL YES! IT'S A EUROPEAN TYPE OF DRAGON THAT DOESN'T HAVE LIMBS, YES. WELL, YOU SEE, IT'S POSSIBLE, YOU WON'T BE AS STUPID AS I THOUGHT AT FIRST." -„I HEARD YOU, YOU THINK I AM JUST A MEMBER OF THE COUNTRY NOBILITY, BUT YOU ARE WRONG. MY FAMILY HAD MORE THAN A LATIFUNDIA. IT HAD CASTLES AND CHATEAUX. MY FATHER WAS AN ELECTOR, AND FOR HIS PREBENDS HE REACHED THE PAPAL CURIA ITSELF!" -„I HAD NO IDEA THAT YOU WOULD BE NOBILIS YOURSELF, WELL, GOOD. WE WILL CONTINUE," HE SAID, TURNING HIS BACK TO ME. -„FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE

WINGLESS EARTH WURMS, WHICH ARE DIVIDED AS FOLLOWS: DESERT - YELLOW-BROWN WITH MEMBRANES BETWEEN THE FINGERS AND GIANT HORNS. THEY ARE SERPENTINE AND LIKE TO FIND THEIR LAIRS IN OLD TOMBS AND RUINS. FURTHERMORE, THE FOREST - SPOTTED PROTECTORS OF THE FORESTS WITH GREEN-BROWN SCALES AND AROUND THEIR NECKS THEY HAVE A RING THAT THEY EXPAND IN MOMENTS OF DANGER IN ORDER TO INTIMIDATE AND DRIVE AWAY THE ENEMY. THEN THE WURMS FROM THE HILLS, WHICH HAVE RED-BROWN COLORED SCALES AND HUGE PAWS WITH THREE TOES. THEY ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR STUPID NATURE AND TYRANNY TOWARDS WEAKER ANIMALS. ALSO, WURMS FROM THE JUNGLE, WHICH RESEMBLE LIZARDS WITH THEIR GREEN APPEARANCE WITH RED OR YELLOW SPOTS. THEY HAVE EMERALD EYES AND KNOW ONLY HATE." "LET ME INTO THE LIBRARY, PLEASE," I INTERRUPTED HIM BEFORE HE COULD CONTINUE. -„WHEN YOUR TIME COMES. THIS IS NOT JUST ANY LIBRARY. THERE ARE BOOKS THAT ONLY A PERSON WHO IS SUFFICIENTLY MENTALLY

TRAINED CAN HANDLE, I.E. READ." I REMAINED SILENT AT THIS AND SURRENDERED TO THE DRAGON SPECIES. SOMETHING STRANGE WAS FEASTING THAT EVENING. ELEGIES SOUNDED IN THE BANQUET HALL. MEAT OR NONE OF WHAT I HAVE EATEN SO FAR. -„THAT'S DRAGON MEAT BOY, JUST EAT IT. AFTER THAT, THE MUSCLES GROW!" SOME DRAGON SLAYER DRUNK ON MEAD WAS TALKING TO ME. -„HEY, WHAT ABOUT POOR SIEGFRIED, HE COULD HAVE BEEN HERE WITH US." -„IS SOMETHING WRONG?" I ASKED. -„IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, BOY. THERE WAS A NORSE DRAGON SLAYER, SIEGFRIED, WHO, THANKS TO A DWARF, LEARNED ABOUT THE TREASURE THAT THE DRAGON THERE WAS GUARDING. WITH THE DWARF'S EFFORTS, TOGETHER THEY OBTAINED A SWORD THAT HE COULD USE TO OVERPOWER THE DRAGON. AND ONLY IN THE ONE PLACE WHERE THE DRAGON HAS THE WEAKEST SCALY SKIN - THE UNDERBELLY. THE DRAGON WAS BLUE AND FLASHED WITH LIGHTNING. HIS TREASURE HAD MANY GEMS THAT BOTH SIEGFRIED AND THE DWARF DESIRED. SO SIEGFRIED MANAGED TO

KILL THE DRAGON.
HE CUT HIS HEART OUT OF HIS BODY AND ATE IT. HE THEN GAINED THE POWER OF A DRAGON THROUGH HIM. HE UNDERSTOOD ANIMALS. WHEN THE DWARF FOUND OUT, HE GOT ANGRY WITH HIM. BUT SIEGFIRED WAS ALREADY AFFECTED BY THE DRAGON'S POWER AND SO HE KILLED THE DWARF WITHOUT MERCY. AFTER THAT, HE WANTED TO APPROPRIATE THE ENTIRE TREASURE, BUT HE HAD NO IDEA THAT IT WAS CURSED. AND SO SIEGFRIED ALSO BECAME A DRAGON." THAT PRETTY MUCH PUT OFF MY APPETITE. -„JUST EAT. IT'S NOT BAD THAT HE ATE THE DRAGON'S HEART. HE COULD HAVE BEEN VERY BENEFICIAL, BUT HE WAS FOOLED BY THE DRAGON'S POWER AND FELL RIGHT INTO THE CLUTCHES OF THE CURSED TREASURE." -„SO IS WEALTH BAD? "IT'S ALMOST ALWAYS CURSED," WHISPERED THE MAN NEXT TO ME. -„AND NOW, BOY, TELL THEM TO GIVE YOU A PIECE OF THAT DRAGON'S ENTRAILS SO THAT YOU ALSO KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH THE DRAGON'S POWER." THAT NIGHT, I WATCHED THE SKY EVEN THOUGH THE CONSTELLATION OF THE DRAGON WAS NO

LONGER THERE. BECAUSE OF THAT, I FELT THE SEEDS OF THE DRAGON'S POWER INSIDE MYSELF . I LISTENED TO THE MOVEMENTS OF THE RAFTERS AND RAFTERS UNDER THE LOUD IMPRESSION OF THE WIND, WHICH SHOUTED TO ME LIKE WIGLAF HIMSELF. THE NEXT DAY WE HAD TRAINING WITH LANCELOT. -„ALFRED, HERE'S YOUR BOW AND ARROWS. HIT THAT TREE OVER THERE," HE SHOWED ME WHAT HE MEANT. MY THE MISSILE FOUND ITS TARGET.-„OK AND NOW TRY THE CONE AT THE TOP." I AIMED AND THE ARROW GOT STUCK IN THE TREE A LITTLE UNDER THE PINE CONES. -„TRY A LITTLE HIGHER," HE ADVISED. BUT SOMETHING HAIRY CLIMBED UP THE BRANCH OF THE TREE UNDER THE PINE CONES. -„OR YOU KNOW WHAT, HIT THE DORMOUSE." "I WON'T SHOOT THAT RODENT," I SAID AND LOWERED MY BOW. -„HE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT." -„YOU YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY. THAT DRAGON WILL BE ANGRY WITH YOU." -„TIME WILL TELL,' I SAID, AND THEN I FELL SILENT AGAIN. HE LOOKED CONFUSED, BUT I KNOW HE FELT THE WORK OF MY POET'S GUT IN THE ANSWER.-„IF YOU ARE

THE SAME DRAGON SLAYER AS THE POET, THEN ALL THE HONOR IS RIGHTFULLY YOURS." AT LAST IT WAS TIME FOR DINNER AND I WENT TO THE BANQUET HALL WITH HER.-„BOY, THE MAIN THING IS THAT YOU DON'T EVER THINK OF TAMING A DRAGON, UNLESS YOU WOULD THEN AT LEAST BE ABLE TO TAME AND TRAIN IT. BECAUSE THAT'S HOW LITTLE MAUD ONCE DECIDED TO TAKE LITTLE DRAGON TO THE HOUSE.

OF COURSE, OVER TIME, THE HIDEOUS WYVERN SLED GREW OUT OF IT AND DESTROYED AND DESTROYED EVERYTHING IT SET OUT TO DO. WELL, THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT BUT TO KILL THE SLED. ONE BRAVE DEATH ROW INMATE DECIDES TO REDEEM HIMSELF BY KILLING A WYVERN. SO THEY PUT HIM IN A BARREL WITH WEAPONS, LIKE A BAMBITTE AND A SABER. THE BARREL WAS CHAINED WITH CANINES AND IRONS. THEY THEN PLACED IT SOMEWHERE THEY KNEW THE WYVERN WOULD GO. THE MAN INSIDE, GARSTAN, CUT HIS HAND TO LURE HER IN AND IT WORKED. SHE WAS THERE. SHE WRAPPED HER TAIL AROUND THE BARREL AND

IMPALED HERSELF ON HER CANINES. SHE SCREAMED IN PAIN AND BECAUSE THE WYVERN HAS . . ." -„IT HAS TWO HIND LEGS AND WINGS AS FORELIMBS." -„GREAT! SO THAT SHE WANTED TO BITE INTO THE BARREL AND STUCK HERSELF IN THE MUSHROOM, BUT SHE DAMAGED THE BARREL. GARSTAN COULD CLEARLY SEE HER TEETH AND SMELL HER FOUL, POISONOUS STENCH CONSUMING HIM AND TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, THE WYVERN TOOK OFF AS SHE FELT THREATENED. THAT'S WHEN GARSTAN GOT SCARED, BECAUSE THE SLED WAS INJURED AND PINNED TO THE BARREL, SO IT DIDN'T FLY WELL. SO GARSTAN AIMED HIS BAMBITO AT HER EYE AND HIT HER. THE SLED IMMEDIATELY BEGAN FLYING UNCOORDINATED AND CRASHING INTO BUILDINGS. FINALLY, SHE FELL JUST OUTSIDE THE CITY. THE BARREL BROKE AND GARSTAN JUMPED OUT OF IT, ALREADY READY WITH A SABER. HE SLASHED AT HER EVERYWHERE HE COULD. BUT IN THOSE SECONDS, HE FORGOT ABOUT HER POISONOUS FUMES AND SO HE FELL TO THE GROUND, POISONED. DRAGONS ARE ONLY HARMFUL, BUT THIS

LEGEND ALSO HAS ANOTHER POINT. AND HERE, EVEN A PETTY CRIMINAL AND MURDERER CAN BECOME A RECOGNIZED DRAGON SLAYER. NOW, TRY TO GUESS MY NAME," SAID THE MAN. -„GARSTAN," I ANSWERED CALMLY. THE MAN STARTED TO LAUGH OUT LOUD. -„YOU HAVE AN OBSERVATION, THAT'S GOOD. YOU KNOW WHO ALSO DIED FROM DRAGON FUMES?" -„WHO?" -„THOR." -„WHAT? THOR? LIKE THAT THOR?" I WONDERED. GARSTAN JUST NODDED. -„WHAT IS THAT. YOU CAN BE A GOD OR A CRIMINAL IN LIFE, BUT WHEN YOU'RE ALSO A DRAGON SLAYER, YOU'RE CHOSEN BY THE UNIVERSE FOR A DIFFERENT PLACE THAN ORDINARY MORTALS GO. DRAGON SLAYERS HAVE THEIR OWN PLACE." -„WAIT, SO THERE IS THOR HERE SOMEWHERE AMONG US?" -„YEAH. RIGHT OVER THERE." HE POINTED HIS FINGER AT THE NURSING PIGLET. THERE STOOD AN EXUBERANT FIGURE WITH LONG BLOND HAIR. I APPROACHED HIM. -„ ARE YOU THOR?"

"YES, DID YOU RECOGNIZE ME?" -„WHAT WAS THE NAME OF THE DRAGON YOU DEFEATED?" I

ASKED HIM FURTHER INSTEAD OF MY ANSWER. -„JORMUNGANDER. IT WAS A WURM, WRAPPED AROUND THE ENTIRE EARTH ALONG THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEANS AND BIT INTO ITS OWN TAIL . I HAVE FOUGHT HER COUNTLESS TIMES AND I KNEW SHE WOULD BE MY FATEFUL CHALLENGE." HE SAID AND THEN CUT OFF A PIECE OF ROAST PIGLET WITH HIS SWORD AND ATE IT. I RETIRED TO MY CHAMBER WHERE I MEDITATED UNDER THE NIGHT SKY. FOR THE SECOND WEEK IN A ROW. TRAINING WITH WIGLAF AGAIN IN THE MORNING. -„ DO YOU KNOW THAT THE SIZE OF A DRAGON CORRESPONDS TO THE PROWESS OF A DRAGON SLAYER?" HE SPOKE TO ME AS I SLURRED. I COULD NOT SPEAK OR ANSWER, SO I REMAINED SILENT. SO I ASKED HIM WHILE SQUATTING. -„AND IF BEOWULF KILLED GRENDEL, IS HE A TROLLSLAYER? WIGLAF SLEEP. -„DO IT OR I WILL BE THE DRAGON SLAYER-SLAYER."

IN THE EVENING, AS ALWAYS, I WENT TO THE BANQUET HALL. I TOOK AS MUCH AS I COULD. -„OF COURSE I AM. I FOUGHT THE CARTHAGINIAN SERPENT DRAGON BY THE RIVER

BAGRADA, WHICH IT INHABITED. IT WAS SPECTACULAR, WE HAD TO USE A CATAPULT ON IT. WE KEPT HIS SKIN IN ONE OF OUR TEMPLES." I LISTENED AGAIN TO WHAT THE EXPERIENCED DRAGON SLAYERS HAD TO SAY. THIS TIME IT WAS REGULUS WHO SPOKE. -„THAT CREATURE WAS OVER THIRTY-SEVEN METERS! SO WE USED CATAPULTS ON GAMES. HAHA!" HE HAPPILY REMEMBERED THE WARLORD IN ROMAN ARMOR. THE OTHERS FROM HIS UNIT ALSO REJOICED WITH HIM. -„YOU HEAR IT, DRAGONS CAN BE KILLED IN DIFFERENT WAYS," LANCELOT SAT DOWN NEXT TO ME. -„I HAVE BROUGHT YOU A MAN WHO COULD BE OF USE TO YOU IN THE DRAGON SLAYING SELECTION," HE SHOWED ME THE MAN. I STOOD UP AND GAVE HIM MY HAND. "MY NAME IS ALFRED," I INTRODUCED MYSELF. "PERSEUS," HE SAID. MY KNEES ALMOST GAVE OUT. I HAD TO SIT DOWN AGAIN. LANCELOT WAS SMILING AND SAID SOMETHING ABOUT COMING RIGHT AWAY. PERSEUS THEN SAT DOWN NEXT TO ME. -„ARE YOU A DEMIGOD? I ASKED. "YES," HE ANSWERED. "TITAN SLAYER AND DRAGON SLAYER, THAT'S ME," HE ADDED. -„YOU

KNOW, WHEN I WAS ON MY WAY TO KILL THE KRAKEN USING THE HEAD OF A MEDUSA, A GORGON, I RAN INTO A SLEEPY GIRL NAMED ANDROMEDA ON THE WAY.
"LIKE A CONSTELLATION," I SAID. -„YES, IT IS NAMED AFTER HER. AND HERE HE WAS TO BE EATEN BY THE SEA WURM KETUS. HE WAS HIDEOUS. LUCKILY I WAS ON MY MYTHIC PEGASUS AND USED THE GORGON HEAD TO PETRIFY HIM, THEN I WAS ABLE TO GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO SLASH THE DRAGON A FEW TIMES UNDER THE SCALES ON HIS CHEST WHERE HIS HEART IS. HE THEN CRUMBLED TO DUST. IN DOING SO, I SAVED HER AND AT THE SAME TIME BECAME A DRAGON SLAYER AS WELL." -„GREAT, BUT YOU'RE MOSTLY KNOWN FOR TAKING DOWN THE KRAKEN, SO YOU'RE A TITAN-SLAYER. DO TITAN-SLAYERS ALSO HAVE THEIR OWN REFUGE?" I ASKED. -„THERE ARE CERTAINLY MANY PLACES WHERE THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE ME AND HOST ME, BUT THIS IS MY BASE. AS YOU CAN SEE, THERE ARE A LOT OF DRAGON SLAYERS AND THEY STICK TOGETHER. HOWEVER, I AM ONLY A TITAN-SLAYER AND I LIKE

CHEERFUL COMPANY." LANCELOT HAS ALREADY RETURNED. "SORRY, PERSEUS, THEY WANT YOU THERE," HE SAID. -„WELL, THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT. SO BE YOUNG AND DON'T BE AFRAID OF ANYTHING!" THE DEMIGOD MOVED AWAY. -„SO DID PERSEUS AT LEAST GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE? I NODDED. LITTLE DID I KNOW THEN THAT HE HAD TAUGHT ME THE MOST PRICELESS LESSON. THAT NIGHT I WAS LOOKING AT THE ANDROMEDA CONSTELLATION. IT WAS AS BEAUTIFUL AS THE FABULOUS GIRL HERSELF. THE NEXT DAY, I WAS WAITING FOR ANOTHER LESSON WITH ST. GEORGE. HE WAS SHOWING ME MORE TAPESTRIES AGAIN WITH HIS STICK. THIS TIME PARTS OF THE DRAGON'S HEAD WHERE ITS POISON GLANDS, TEETH AND THE WHOLE STRUCTURE OF THE SKULL ARE. HE THEN TOOK APART THE DRAGON SKIN. ITS LAYERS AND PARTS AND SPECIES. -„DRAGON SCALES CANNOT BE HURT BY ANY MAN-MADE BLADE, BUT IF YOU GET CLOSE ENOUGH OR HAVE A GOOD SHOT, YOU MAY MANAGE TO HIT IT BETWEEN OR UNDER THE SCALES. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT SOME DRAGONS HAVE A WEAK SPOT IN

THE UNDERBELLY AREA, SO YOU CAN TRY IT THROUGH THERE." HE WENT ON FOR HOURS. HE JUST KEPT TALKING. -„WHEN WILL I BE ABLE TO GO TO THE LIBRARY? -„EAGER STUDENT, LIKE BEFORE THE FIRST LOVE, HUH?" HE SMIRKED. "YOU'D RATHER HAVE AN ABBESS BY YOUR SIDE," I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. -„TSS, YOU WOULD DRIVE SOME MATRON TO MY BODY, YES, YOU!" ST. GEORGE SPREAD OUT. "OKAY," HE SAID AFTER A SLIGHT PAUSE AND BEGAN DISCUSS THINGS AROUND HIM. -„HERE ARE YOUR KEYS AND I'M CURIOUS WHAT YOU WILL FIND THERE, YOU DRAGON SLAYER POET." I TOOK THE WHOLE BUNDLE AND TRIED ONE KEY AT A TIME UNTIL ONE OF THEM FIT INSIDE. I TURNED IT AND OPENED THE DOOR TO THE VAST LIBRARY. -„SAINT ROMAN IS WATCHING OVER HER, SO DON'T SCARE HIM," I HEARD FROM BEHIND ME. I WALKED IN CAREFULLY AND LOOKED AROUND AT THE SHELVES FULL OF BOOKS. BETWEEN THEM STOOD THE FIGURE OF THE ARCHBISHOP. -„ARE YOU SAINT ROMAN? -„YES," HE ANSWERED ME. -„AND YOU ARE ALSO A DRAGON SLAYER?"

I ASKED BLUNTLY. -„BY ALL SAINTS, SURELY I AM. EVERYONE HERE IS A DRAGON SLAYER. ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORMANDY, OUR CITY WAS PLAGUED BY AN EVIL WATER-SPEWING DRAGON. HE BURNED SEVERAL VILLAGES AROUND MY CITY. I SET OUT WITH THE WHOLE EXPEDITION TO DESTROY THE MONSTER. IT DUMPED GALLONS OF WATER ON US AND MANY OF US WERE BLOWN AWAY BY THE CURRENT. BUT I DIDN'T GIVE UP. I SNAPPED MY FINGERS AGAINST THE DRAGON, FORMING THE MOST HOLY SYMBOL. THE DRAGON REACTED TO THIS BY FALLING INTO A SWOON, AND THE REST OF US TIED HIM UP AND DRAGGED HIM FURTHER TO THE PEOPLE. THEY RAN AT HIM AND FINISHED HIM OFF THEMSELVES. IN THE END, THEY BURNED HIM." -„THEN WHY AREN'T THOSE PEOPLE HERE IF THEY KILLED HIM?" I ASKED. -„BECAUSE THEY DID IT OUT OF GOD'S WILL AND I WAS THEIR CLOSEST REPRESENTATIVE OR MEDIATOR BETWEEN THEM AND GOD." -„IT MAKES SENSE TO ME NOW. THEY WORKED HARD AND IN THE END YOU ARE HERE INSTEAD OF THEM." SAINT ROMAN LAUGHED AT ME. -„WHAT

ARE YOU LOOKING AT, YOUNG MAN?" -„I DO NOT KNOW MYSELF. CAN I HAVE A LOOK AROUND HERE?" -„SURE, SURE. JUST TELL ME BEFORE YOU PICK UP ONE OF THE BOOKS. YOU NEVER KNOW WHAT SECRETS OR UNWANTED KNOWLEDGE MAY BE HIDDEN IN IT. NOT ALL OF THEM ARE GOOD," HE SAID. I NODDED AND SLOWLY STEPPED BETWEEN THE SHELVES, LOOKING EACH SIDE RIGHT AND LEFT ALONG. I PAID ATTENTION TO EVERY BOOK SPINE, EVERY HINGE, DOOR FRAME. LIKE THAT, THE FIRST TWO SHELVES, THEN ANOTHER AND ANOTHER UNTIL SOMETHING FELL TO THE GROUND BEHIND MY STEPS. IT WAS A RED LEATHER BOUND BOOK. I TOOK IT IN MY HANDS, AND THAT MORNING I SAW THE LIBRARIAN ST. ROMAN PEEPING FROM BEHIND THE CORNER OF THE BOOKCASE. WITH FINGERS BEARING A SEAL SIMILAR TO THE FISHING RING OF THE POPE HIMSELF, HE CLUNG TO ONE OF THE SHELVES.
SO I DIDN'T LOOK AT THE BOOK MUCH AND PUT IT BACK IN ITS PLACE. I WENT DOWN THE NEXT CORRIDOR BETWEEN THE BOOKSHELVES BY MYSELF. I WAS WALKING THROUGH IT FROM

WHERE I HAD LEFT OFF BEFORE. FIRST STEP, I SCAN THE NEAREST BOOKS ON THE RIGHT. SECOND STEP, I DO THE SAME WITH THE BOOKS ON THE LEFT AND SUDDENLY THE SOUND AGAIN. I PEEKED THROUGH THE SHELF INTO THE AISLE I CAME BACK FROM. THE SAME BOOK THAT I WAS RETURNING FELL OUT AGAIN. AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS THE LIBRARIAN, BUT HE WAS BACK IN HIS USUAL PLACE. I WENT TO GET HER AND CARRIED HER IN MY ARMS TO THE ARCHBISHOP. "I WOULD LIKE TO BORROW THIS BOOK," I TOLD HIM. HE TOOK HER AND EXAMINED HER SIDES. -„THAT'S RIGHT," HE EXCITEDLY FIXED HIS GAZE ON MINE. -„THIS BOOK IS NOT JUST FOR A YOUNG PERSON. FOLLOW ME," HE SAID AND WENT OUT TO MEET SAINT GEORGE. HE PLACED IT ON THE TABLE IN FRONT OF HIM. EVEN SAINT GEORGE WAS HORRIFIED BY THE SIGHT. -„DIDN'T I TELL YOU NOT TO TOUCH ANYTHING?!" HE FIXED HIS GAZE ON ME, IN WHICH THE SEEDS OF ANGER GLISTENED. I WAS SILENT. THERE WAS SILENCE FOR A WHILE. AFTER THAT, SAINT ROMAN TURNED TO ME AND SAID: "YOU ARE FREE FOR

TODAY," AND BEGAN TO GOSSIP WITH THE OTHER SAINT. SO I FOUND REST IN THE BANQUET HALL. THIS TIME THERE WERE FEW PEOPLE. JUST A COUPLE. ME AND SOME MAN BY THE FIRE OVER WHICH THE PIG WAS ROASTING. I APPROACHED SILENTLY AND WAITED FOR THE PERSON IN QUESTION TO NOTICE ME. -„HELLO, I'M A CERTAIN MOORE FROM WALDTA." -„ALFRED." -„WHERE ARE YOU FROM?" -„OF . . .," I STOPPED. IT FINALLY DAWNED ON ME THAT I DON'T KNOW MY ORIGINS. I COULDN'T REMEMBER WHERE I CAME FROM. -„HAHA, MATE. EVERYONE IS HERE FROM SOMEWHERE. MAN, THIS PLACE IS DENSE, THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE AND YOU SERIOUSLY DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY'RE FROM AND YOU NORMALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND A WORD THEY SAY, BUT ONCE THE DRAGON MEAT COMES, ANYTHING GOES. HA-HA." "WHAT DRAGON DID YOU KILL?" -„ WHITE. IT WASN'T VERY BIG, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH FOR ME. HE HAD ICY BREATH THAT WAS FREEZING. I KNEW WHAT DRAGONS THEY WERE. I HAD TO REALLY PREPARE FOR IT." -„AND HOW?" -„I GOT SOME ARMOR WITH

SPIKES, AND THE NIGHT BEFORE I PUT IT ON IN THE MORNING, A GIRL WITH DARK HAIR HAD TO ANOINT ME WITH A SPECIAL OINTMENT. THEN IN THE MORNING SHE ALSO HELPED ME INTO MY ARMOR." "DID YOU MAKE LOVE TO HER?" -„ PHEW! BOY, ANSWER FOR YOURSELF."
THERE WAS A MOMENT OF SILENCE. -„THEY SAY THAT MAKING LOVE THE DAY BEFORE A FIGHT BRINGS BAD LUCK BECAUSE IT EXHAUSTS YOU. YOU DON'T HAVE THAT MUCH STRENGTH IN YOUR LEGS, BUT I'LL TELL YOU, YES, I MADE LOVE TO HER AND STILL DID IT. THANKS TO THE ARMOR HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO ME AND I GOT CLOSE ENOUGH FOR HIM TO MATCH. HE WAS AS TALL AS ME WITH HIS NECK OUTSTRETCHED. I STRUCK AT HIM WITH MY SWORD, BUT HE WAS TERRIBLY HARD, AS IF HE HAD A CARAPACE MADE OF SCALES. SO I HIT HIM IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD WITH THE BLUNT SIDE OF THE SWORD UNDER MY HAND AND HE STARTED TO SQUIRM WEIRDLY. HE HAD HORNS AND HORNS LIKE THEY GROW OUT OF THEIR BONES, SO I WAS AFRAID HE WAS GOING TO ATTACK ME, BUT HE TOOK OFF AND FLEW

KIND OF CRAZY AND THEN FELL DOWN. HE RUSHED AT ME. I TRIED TO RUN BUT . . . IT DIDN'T WORK. THAT ARMOR WAS TOO HEAVY. WELL, MAYBE IT WILL ALSO BE THE LOVE-MAKING THE NIGHT BEFORE. YOU ARE A SMART BOY." -„WAIT, SO HOW DID IT TURN OUT?" -„PHEW! WELL, HOW ABOUT WHEN I'M STANDING HERE IN FRONT OF YOU NOW. POORLY! HE FELL DIRECTLY ON MY HEAD AND WE BOTH DIED." I WANTED TO LAUGH, BUT I COULDN'T. MY MUSCLES WERE STILL SORE FROM YESTERDAY'S TRAINING. -„SO WHAT IS THE LESSON OF THIS YOUNG MAN? -„APPLY THE OINTMENT THE NIGHT BEFORE, DEPENDING ON WHAT TYPE OF DRAGON WE ARE GOING FOR." -„WELL, THAT TOO, BUT THE MAIN THING IS THAT DRAGON SLAYERS LOVE EACH OTHER ALL THE TIME IN THEIR FREE TIME AND WHEN THEY HAVE TO GO ON A DRAGON HUNT, TO POSSIBLE DEATH, THEY SHOULD STOP AND GATHER SOME STRENGTH." -„OKAY, BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER HERE ANYWAY." -„LOOK, THAT'S A FACT, YOU SHOULD FIND OUT WHAT IT'S LIKE WITH WOMEN HERE, NOW THAT I'M IN THAT PARADISE FOR

DRAGON SLAYERS." MORE PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY ENTERED THE ROOM. SLOWLY, IT STARTED TO FILL UP HERE, AND THE MEAT ON THE SPIT, ON THE OTHER HAND, DWINDLED. -„WELL, IT'S A PITY THAT SAINT MURROUGH IS NOT HERE WITH US. HAVE YOU HEARD OF HIM?" ONE OF THE DRAGON SLAYERS ASKED WHILE CUTTING MEAT FROM THE GRILLED PORK. -„I WAS SILENT." -„NO, SOMEONE ELSE INTERRUPTED. -„SAINT MURROUGH WAS AN IRISH MAN. HE DIDN'T KILL THE DRAGON THOUGH. HE ONLY TRAPPED HIM IN THE DEPTHS AT THE BOTTOM OF LOUGH FOYLE. THAT DRAGON NAMED PAISTE HAD RAM'S HORNS." -„AND WHAT DID HE PIN HIM THERE WITH? -„BY PRAYER." -„JUST BY PRAYING?"-„YES." -„HE COULD HAVE TORN IT, THAT SNAKE." -„YES, HE COULD HAVE DONE THAT AND HE DIDN'T. AND THAT'S WHY HE'S NOT HERE WITH US. THAT'S WHEN ST. GEORGE AND ST. ROMAN APPEARED IN THE ROOM." -„LET'S MAKE A FIRE TODAY, WE'LL SEE WHAT THEY TELL US," HE SAID.

AFTER DINNER, EVERYONE MOVED TO ONE MORE AREA BY STAIRS OUT AND DOWN INTO THE

ADJACENT VALLEY AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN, WHERE A LARGE FIRE PIT WAS PREPARED WITH TRIBAL BENCHES AROUND IT. THE DRAGON SLAYERS LIT THE PREPARED CAMPFIRE WITH TORCHES AND IT WAS ABLAZE IN MINUTES. THE ENTIRE CONVENTION OF DWELLINGS LOOKED INTO THE FIRE AS IF IT WERE SOME KIND OF ORACLE FOR THEM. THE FLAMES RAISED THEM SEVERAL METERS ABOVE THE MEN AROUND THEM. AT THAT MOMENT, THE ASH BENEATH HIM BEGAN TO SINK AND A HAND WITH LONG FINGERS GREW OUT OF IT. SHE CLAWED HER WAY OUT OF THE HOT ASHES. WAS IT A GIRL? THE FIGURE HAD LONG HAIR AND WAS DRESSED IN THE COLORFUL FEATHERS OF BIRDS OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN. A MAN SPOKE TO HER FROM AFAR, WHO WAS PROBABLY THE CLOSEST TO HER IMAGE. -„WELCOME TO THE REFUGE," HE SPOKE TO HER IN AN UNKNOWN LANGUAGE, BUT I UNDERSTOOD HER THANKS TO THE DRAGON MEAT. -„WHO YOU ARE?" THE GIRL ASKED. -„MY NAME IS YEYARA - NO - HEIDA AND I WILL BE YOUR MASTER HERE. WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" "DARAGONGARA," SHE REPLIED.

-„GOOD DARAGONGAR, ME AND HERE WEE SAN AND INDRA WILL NOW TAKE YOU TO YOUR CHAMBERS." YEYARA - NO - HEIDA SAID, AND THE FOUR, WITH THE NEWCOMER IN THE MIDDLE, MADE THEIR WAY TO THE LARGE DWELLING. "NOW APPROACH, YOUNG MAN," SAID A VOICE FROM THE FIRE. NOW THE REST OF THE PEOPLE ALSO MADE THEIR WAY BACK INTO THE BUILDING. HERE I ALSO RETIRED TO MY CHAMBER AND WATCHED THE NIGHT SKY ALL NIGHT UNTIL THE MORNING DAWN, AS USUAL EVERY NIGHT. THE SKY WAS STRANGE THAT NIGHT. I SAW A SWARM OF METEORITES FALLING ACROSS THE SKY. IN THE MORNING, TRAINING WITH LANCELOT AWAITED ME. -„HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO KILL A DRAGON?" HE ASKED WITH UNDISGUISED INTEREST. I WAS SILENT FOR A MOMENT AND THOUGHT. -„IT DEPENDS WHAT TYPE OF DRAGON IT WOULD BE." -„IT DOESN'T MATTER NOW, MAYBE YOU WON'T KNOW WHAT THE DRAGON WILL LOOK LIKE UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT." -„IN THAT CASE, I WOULD NEED A LOT OF LIGHT THIN SWORDS." -„WHY?" -„I

WOULD LIKE TO DO IT LIKE PERSEUS. DON'T YOU HAVE ANY MAGICAL GADGETS? -„WHAT DOESN'T HAVE YOU! THAT'S HOW THEY'D TAKE YOU FOR A FRAUD IF YOU LET THAT DRAGON PETRIFY. THAT WOULD BE NO FIGHT. PERSEUS IS LUCKY TO HAVE ENCOUNTERED THE DRAGON THEN. IF HE HADN'T, HE CERTAINLY WOULDN'T BE WITH US TODAY. FIGHTING A DRAGON IS AN HONOR. DON'T FORGET THAT BOY." -„IN THAT CASE, I'LL HAVE TO DO IT MY WAY. IT WILL BE LIKE GIVING HIM ACUPUNCTURE. I WILL LEAVE THAT SWORD IN IT, AND ON THE CONTRARY, I WILL ADD ANOTHER ONE, WHICH I WILL ALSO LEAVE IN IT, AND I WILL ADD MORE."
-„OH, AND WHY?" -„BECAUSE GETTING TOO CLOSE IS DANGEROUS, AND BESIDES, I HAVE TO HIT THE DRAGON EITHER UNDER THE SCALES OR IN THE UNDERBELLY." -„OR?" -„OR FROM THE INSIDE. BUT THAT DEPENDS ON THE SIZE OF THE DRAGON. IF I LEAVE THE GUN IN HIM, IT'S MORE LIKELY TO HURT HIM EVEN MORE IF HE WANTS TO MOVE AFTER ME." -„THAT'S QUITE INGENIOUS. OKAY, HERE'S A SELECTION OF DIFFERENT WEAPONS. CHOOSE THE TYPE OF SWORD THAT WILL SUIT

YOU FOR TRAINING." I DID SO AND SPENT THE WHOLE DAY LEARNING TO STICK AS MANY SWORDS AS POSSIBLE INTO THE CENTER OF THE PRACTICE DUMMY. "IT'S A SHAME YOU DON'T HAVE A TRAINING DRAGON HERE," I SAID AT DINNER. IT MADE THE MEN AROUND ME LAUGH. -„ALFRED, I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO SOMEONE. THIS IS MARDUK, THE SUPREME SUMERIAN-AKKADIAN GOD OF THE CHALDEAN EMPIRE. PATRON SAINT OF BABYLONIA"-„HELLO YOUNG MAN, I WOULD LIKE TO TELL YOU MY STORY OF TAMING THE DRAGON. I FOUGHT AGAINST THE OCEAN GODDESS TIAMAT HERSELF. A GIANT DRAGON WITH SEVEN HEADS. EACH WITH A DIFFERENT COLOR. BUT I HAD TO DO IT SUBTLY. WAIT FOR THE SITUATION TO TURN IN MY FAVOR. THE DAY THE HURRICANE HIT THE LAND, I TOOK MY BOW AND ARROWS AND STOOD BEHIND HIM. THE GODDESS TIAMAT OPENED HER MOUTH AND WANTED TO SWALLOW THE HURRICANE SO THAT IT WOULD NOT ANNOY HER, AND AT THAT MOMENT I SHOT SEVEN OF MY ARROWS AT ONCE INTO ITS MAWS. -„AND THAT KILLED HER?

-„EXACTLY."-„ENCHANTING." GOD MARDUK WAS SILENT WITH A SMILE.-„I EVEN HAVE MY OWN DRAGON - MUSHCHUSHSHA, IN TRANSLATION IT MEANS FIERCE SNAKE. IT HAS THE BODY OF A SNAKE, THE FRONT LEGS OF A LION AND THE BACK OF AN EAGLE." -„AND WHERE DO YOU HAVE IT? I ASKED.-, "HE'S OUTSIDE OF THIS REALM. I COULD SIMPLY SUMMON HIM IF I WANTED TO. I HAVE VARIOUS ABILITIES FOR A YOUNG MAN, FROM CASTING SPELLS TO HEALING AND BESTOWING LIGHT TO DETERMINING FATE," HE POINTED HIS WISE APPARITION AT ME.-„I CAN HAVE A QUESTION? WHAT FATE WOULD YOU ASSIGN ME?" HE LAUGHED IN A FRIENDLY WAY. "YOU, BOY, HAVE YOUR DESTINY IN THE STARS." THAT NIGHT I FELT AGAIN THE END OF ANOTHER THREE-DAY WEEK. EVEN THE STARS IN THE SKY SAID SO. I WILL TRAIN AGAIN WITH WIGLAF, BEOWULF'S NEPHEW. AND ABOVE ALL I FELT AN INCREDIBLY STRONG DETERMINATION FOR ANY DIFFICULT CHALLENGE.

AGAIN, I COULDN'T TURN A BLIND EYE TO IT. IN THE MORNING, I WENT TO THE TRAINING GROUND EARLIER TO SEE IF MY MASTER WOULD

BE THERE. HE WASN'T. THIS TIME I OVERTOOK HIM. I FELT THIS WEEK WAS MINE. -„WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE SO SOON? -„WHY YOU SO LATE? HE LAUGHED. -„LET'S START RIGHT AWAY. HAVE A TWENTY!" BEFORE I EVEN STARTED TO FINISH THE HANDLES, HE GAVE ME ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE NEXT CLASS AND GOT HIMSELF A SMALL BOTTLE OF MEAD. HE JUST SAT IN SILENCE AND DRANK. HE LOOKED STRAIGHT AT THE ROCKS AND OCCASIONALLY FELL ASLEEP AND GRUNTED IN HIS SLEEP. I PRACTICED MINE AND LEFT HIM THERE SLEEPING ON THE TREE TRUNKS AS THE SUN WENT DOWN AND WENT TO THE BANQUET HALL MYSELF TO HAVE DINNER. I FELT A SORT OF CALM BEFORE THE STORM. A DARK-SKINNED MAN STOOD BY THE FIRE. IT TOOK A LONG TIME FOR THE MAN TO CUT THE PIG. HE COULDN'T HIT THE MEAT. -„DO YOU WANT TO HELP WITH THAT?" I ASKED. -„I CAN STILL CUT A PIG," HE TURNED HIS GAZE ON ME, WHICH WAS LOST IN SIGHT. SO I WAITED A LONG TIME BEFORE MY TURN, BUT IT WAS WORTH IT. -„DID YOU LOSE YOUR SIGHT IN A

FIGHT WITH A DRAGON?" I ASKED HIM. -„YES, THE SAME WITH FIFTEEN HORSES AND MEN. THAT SUMERIAN WURM GANDAVERA WAS A NASTY CANNIBAL, BUT I FINALLY GOT HIM AT THE COST OF MY SIGHT." -„YOU'RE OUT OF PRACTICE KERESAPO," SOMEONE SUDDENLY PATTED HIM ON THE BACK, SOME OTHER DRAGON SLAYER. AFTER DINNER I WENT TO MY ROOM TO GET READY FOR THE NEXT DAY. THAT NIGHT THE SKY WARMED MY SOUL. THE MOON WAS IN THE WAXING FULL MOON AND THUS SHOWED WITH ITS HEAT THE ENTIRE HILLY LANDSCAPE WITH THE FOOTHILLS AND THE ROCKS. IN THE MORNING I HAD A LESSON WITH ST. GEORGE, WHO WAS VERY FROWNING. -„YOUNG MAN, THE BOOK YOU CHOSE IS VERY DANGEROUS IN THE WRONG HANDS. IT IS THE BIBLE OF THE DRAGON GODDESS TIAMAT HERSELF." -„MARDUK KILLED HER, I SPOKE WITH HIM THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY." SAINT GEORGE NARROWED HIS EYES AS IF I HADN'T SAID ANYTHING. -„WHAT MADE YOU CHOOSE THAT BOOK?" -„HONESTLY, SHE FELL OFF THE SHELF TWICE

WHEN I WALKED PAST HER. -„THAT'S HOW THINGS ARE," SAINT GEORGE GRABBED HIS CHIN. -„ ST. ROMAN WAS RIGHT. THAT BOOK CHOSE YOU, WHICH MEANS THE GODDESS TIAMAT DID TOO.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT OR WHO YOU'LL BE UP AGAINST BOY, BUT BE VERY CAREFUL. THIS WILL BE NO ORDINARY DRAGON OR MUTANT. YOU WILL FACE THE POWER OF GOD." HE THEN OPENED THE BOOK AND WE STARTED READING IT TOGETHER. IT WAS FULL OF STRANGE FORMULAS, INVOCATIONS AND EVOCATIONS LIKE ANY GRIMOIRE. THE DRAGON GODDESS OF ALL WATERS, TIAMAT, HAD ELEVEN OF HER DRAGON OFFSPRING WHO REPRESENTED HER ARMY, LED BY KINGU, HER FIRSTBORN SON. EACH OF THEIR DESCENDANTS WAS DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IN SEVERAL PAGES. I THEN FLIPPED THROUGH A FEW CORNERS OF THE PAGES AND THEY RELEASED DUST THAT MADE ME INSTINCTIVELY SNEEZE. I TURNED MY HEAD FIRST SO AS NOT TO SMUDGE HER SIDES. HOWEVER, I NOTICED THAT THE SAME PAGES THAT I BENT THE CORNERS OF HAD LINES OF INK ON THEM THAT

CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER WITH THE MOVEMENT OF THE PAGES AND THUS APPEARED TO ME THE INSIGNIA OF A DRAGON THAT WAS MOST LIKELY CHOSEN FOR ME BY THE UNIVERSE, AKASH. IT WAS KING HIMSELF. RULER OF THE UNDERWORLD. I HAD READ THE FIRST TWO PAGES WHEN ST. ROMANUS ENTERED THE ROOM. -„DID YOU COME UP WITH SOMETHING FROM THAT BOOK? HE ASKED. "KING," I ANSWERED. "I WILL FIGHT WITH IT," I ADDED IMMEDIATELY. -„KINGU IS NOT JUST ANY GOD'S DRAGON. IT IS A DEMON SPECIMEN. THE STRONGEST OF ALL ELEVEN CHILDREN OF TIAMAT. THEIR LEADER. HE EVEN HAS THREE FORMS OF HIS APPEARANCE. YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO BE REALLY CAREFUL WITH HIM, BOY." -„YES, HE KNOWS," SAINT GEORGE ANSWERED FOR ME. -„READ THE SUMMONS CAREFULLY BOY, I'M SURE HE'LL WANT A BLOOD SACRIFICE." I WAS UNSURE. THE WHOLE BOOK WAS DESCRIBED IN DETAILED PROCESSES OF RITUALS IN WHICH THE ENERGY OF THE ATMOSPHERE CREATED FROM THE MATING OF BODIES AND SEXUAL GRATIFICATIONS TOGETHER WITH BLOOD

SACRIFICES IN THE FORM OF LIFE FLUID FROM ITSELF PLAYED A HUGE ROLE, FOR PAINTING THE INSIGNIA. THAT WAS ONE PART - THE WORSHIP OF THE DRAGON CULT. THE SECOND PART WAS SUMMONING DRAGON ENTITIES. HOW ELSE BUT WITH THE HELP OF YOUR BLOOD. -„WILL I HAVE TO SUMMON HIM FIRST?" I WAS SURPRISED AT THE VOICE. -„HAHA, SURE. YOU DIDN'T COME HERE BECAUSE YOU KILLED A DRAGON IN YOUR PREVIOUS LIFE, BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR NAME. YOU HAVE TO LIVE UP TO YOUR NAME. EVERY DRAGON THAT ONE OF US KILLS HERE NEEDS TO BE SUMMONED FIRST." "SO THAT MEANS I DIED BEFORE I GOT HERE."
-„PROBABLY MOST LIKELY YES, BOY." -„I THINK THAT MIGHT BE ENOUGH FOR TODAY," SAID ST. GEORGE AND CLOSED THE GRIMOIRE. -„YOU CAN GO HAVE DINNER, BOY. THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW YOU ARE GOING TO SLAY THE DRAGON, SO GET READY." DID I REALLY HEAR THAT AT THE END OF THIS THIRD WEEK I'M GOING TO SLAY A DRAGON? SO I'LL JUST DECIDE TO GO KILL HIM. DOING IT IS ANOTHER THING.

I MADE MY WAY THROUGH THE BANQUET HALL. THERE WEREN'T MANY PEOPLE HERE, SO I ATE IN PEACE. I REMEMBERED THE GIRL, THE NEWBIE WHO HAD RECENTLY RISEN FROM THE ASHES. WHERE IS HE NOW? AT THAT MOMENT SHE WALKED IN. IT HAD TO BE A GIRL, SHE WALKED LIKE THAT. LIKE A FELINE ON THE HUNT. SHE WALKED OVER TO THE PIGLET AND CUT OFF ITS TAIL. SHE THEN PILED ON A LOT OF POTATOES AND VEGETABLES AND FINALLY SAT DOWN DIRECTLY ACROSS FROM ME ACROSS THE DINING ROOM. WE BOTH SAT ALONE AT THE TABLES AND THROUGH THE UNOCCUPIED CHAIRS WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER, HOW WE ARE AND FEED ON THE ANIMAL. HOWEVER, WE COULDN'T AFFORD TO GET IN EACH OTHER'S WAY, SO I STAYED WHERE I WAS ALL EVENING. SO DOES SHE. -„GOOD EVENING, MY NAME IS DANIEL, I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE MY DRAGON SLAYING STORY WITH YOU," ONE OF THE DRAGON SLAYERS SUDDENLY SPOKE LOUDLY. -„ONCE UPON A TIME IN BABYLONIA, MANY PEOPLE WORSHIPED DRAGONS AS THE ONLY DEITY. KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR HIMSELF CHOSE ONE OF THESE

AS HIS IDOL. THE DRAGON WAS LONG AND SERPENTINE. HIS SCALES WERE COLORED SAND. HE HAD A CREST AROUND HIS NECK AND HORNS ON HIS HEAD. IT WAS A DESERT EARTH WURM. THEY WORSHIPED HIM SO MUCH THAT I HAD TO STEP IN. I POISONED HIM TO MAKE THEM REALIZE THAT HE IS NOT FIT FOR WORSHIP. AFTER THAT THE KING HAD ME EXECUTED AND I APPEARED HERE." -„DANIELA'S AMAZING STORY. I'M FINALLY GLAD YOU'RE WITH US," SAID ANOTHER DRAGON SLAYER. THE SIGN OF THE WORDS I HAD JUST HEARD RESONATED IN MY HEAD. I KNEW THERE WAS GOING TO BE A RESOLUTION. TO BE HERE, I HAD TO DIE SOMEWHERE FIRST. I ALREADY KNEW THIS BEFOREHAND, BUT ONLY NOW HAVE I REALLY STARTED TO REALIZE IT. COULD IT BE THE GIRL WHO WAS LOOKING AT ME ACROSS THE HALL? IT WAS NOT RANDOM PEOPLE BUT ONLY DRAGON SLAYERS AFTER THEIR DEATH THAT GATHERED IN THE REFUGE. EVEN THAT MEANT I HAD TO KILL A DRAGON IN MY PREVIOUS BEING, BUT I DIDN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING LIKE THAT. ACTUALLY, I DIDN'T EVEN

REMEMBER MY DEATH.
IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I WOULD DIE OF NATURAL CAUSES IN MY SLEEP SO YOUNG? WAS I ALSO POISONED LIKE THE DRAGON IN DANIEL'S STORY? OR WAS I MURDERED IN SOME OTHER WAY? OR WAS I POSSIBLY KIDNAPPED BY SOME KIND OF MAGIC? I COULDN'T REMEMBER. THIS CAN ALL JUST BE MY GUESSES. HOWEVER, IT MAKES SENSE TO ME THAT IF I WANT TO KILL A DRAGON, I HAVE TO FIND IT SOMEWHERE OR SUMMON IT. WITH THIS THOUGHT I RETIRED TO MY CHAMBER AND LOOKED AT THE STARS ABOVE THE MOUNTAINS. IF I'VE ALREADY GOTTEN HERE, IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW. I AM FULL OF STRENGTH AND DETERMINATION. I HAD PRACTICE WITH LANCELOT IN THE MORNING. HE BROUGHT ME A SET OF LIGHT SKINNY SWORDS THAT I HAD REQUESTED EARLIER AND THAT I NEEDED FOR MY TASK HERE. THEY HAD A SUPER SHARP EDGE - A SPIKE, LIKE NEEDLES. THEY ALL NEEDED TO FIT UNDER THE SCALES BY STABBING AND I WAS ABLE TO DO THAT WITH ALL OF THEM. I STUCK THEM TO THE LAST IN A WOODEN PRACTICE DUMMY. -„IT'S A

SHAME YOU DON'T HAVE A WOODEN DRAGON HERE, IT WOULD BE BETTER TO TRY IT ON." -„YES?" LAUGHED LANCELOT. -„YOU MADE AN IMPRESSION ON ME ALFRED, YOU HAVE THE HEART OF A DRAGON." "NOT YET," I SAID CONFIDENTLY. WE MADE OUR WAY TO THE BANQUET HALL, FROM WHICH THE SOUND OF CHANTS FLOWED. PEOPLE WERE DRINKING AND SINGING AS LOUD AS THEIR THROATS COULD GO. LANCELOT AND I WERE CUTTING THE MEAT OFF THE LAMB. MEANWHILE, I LISTENED TO WHAT SOMEONE AROUND ME WAS SAYING. -„DO YOU KNOW THAT DRAGONS ARE NOT ONLY WITH SCALES? THEY ARE OFTEN DIFFERENT MUTANTS. LIKE AN ASDEEV, HE WAS A WHITE DRAGON AND HAD BAT WINGS. I, RUSTAM KNOCKED HIM DOWN." "YOU ARE A GOOD FIGHTER," SOMEONE PATTED HIM ON THE BACK. THAT NIGHT, I WENT OUT TO THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN, AND HERE WE ALL GATHERED WHO HAD WORKED TOGETHER ON MY DRAGON HUNT. SAINT GEORGE, WIGLAF AND LANCELOT. THE BLIZZARDS WERE PLAYING AROUND US. I GOT MY HANDS ON A BOOK, THE GRIMOIRE OF THE GODDESS

TIAMAT, AND IN IT I FLIPPED THROUGH THE PAGES WITH THE WORDS OF EVOCATION OF THE DRAGON CALLED KINGU. HIS BLOOD IS IN THE BLOOD OF EVERY PERSON IN THE WORLD. HE, BY DYING THEN, GAVE LIFE TO THE HUMAN RACE. I STARTED THE LECTURE:

KING, RULER OF THE VOID FIRST AMONG GODS
OF FURY YOUR BLOOD FLOWS THROUGH THE
VEINS OF EVERY HUMAN CREATURE YOU HOLD
THE TABLETS OF DESTINY THE KEYS TO THE
GATES OF THE DRAGON WHERE LOST
KNOWLEDGE LIES IN PROTECTIVE ANTICIPATION
AWAITING THE RETURN OF THE PRIMORDIAL
GODS WHEN THE WORLD IS REAWAKENED
THROUGH THE POWER CONTAINED IN THE
HUMAN BLOODLINE HERITAGE OF THE
DRAGONKING , FIERCE SCORPION GOD-PROTECTOR
OF FORGOTTEN KNOWLEDGE COME FORTH FROM
THE WOMB OF THE DRAGON AWAKE FROM THE
HANDS OF THE ONE WHO HOLDS THE WORLD IN
HER TIMELESS EMBRACE ARISE THROUGH THE
LIFE SUBSTANCE I POUR OUT IN YOUR NAME

I FINISHED, SLICING OPEN MY PALM. DROPS OF MY BLOOD FELL ON THE COLD AND SNOW-WHITE

GROUND. THE SNOW HISSED AS IT MELTED. I LOOKED UP AT THE CLEAR FULL MOON THAT WAS TINTED THE COLORS OF ROSES. A HIDEOUS DRAGON ROAR RANG OUT. THERE SOMEWHERE IN THE TOPS OF THE MOUNTAINS ABOVE ME. "YOUR JOURNEY HAS BEGUN," SAID LANCELOT. "BE BRAVE," WIGLAF ENCOURAGED ME. "YOU CAN STILL ABDICATE," SAID ST. GEORGE. -„NO, I CAN'T ANYMORE," I ANSWERED AND SET OFF WITH MY RIGHT FOOT FORWARD ON THE PATH LEADING TO THE ROCKS. I HAD A BURDEN ON MY SHOULDERS. BAGS WITH SWORDS IN THE OTHER HAND A LIGHT SHIELD. ARMOR PLAIN LEATHER LIGHT. A CHUTOR WITH WATER FROM MOUNTAIN SPRINGS AROUND THE WAIST. I COULD ALREADY FEEL THE DARKNESS INSIDE ME AND THE FEELING THAT THIS WAS ONLY A ONE-WAY STREET. NARROW CREVICES BETWEEN ROCKS WHERE ONLY A FURIOUS WIND CAN DRIVE. I WAS LEFT WITH BLOODY MARKS FROM A CUT PALM AS I BRACED MYSELF WITH MY HANDS FOR EACH HEAVY STEP AGAINST THE WIND THAT BLEW PIECES OF SNOWFLAKES INTO MY FACE. THE FROST BURNED ME EVERYWHERE IT GOT. I

CLIMBED ONTO THE ROCK FROM WHERE IT LED FOR A LONG TIME INTO THE MOUNTAINS. THE WIND WAS BLOWING THERE LIKE THE BLIZZARDS HE USED TO BLOW THERE. I WENT THROUGH THAT PASS BETWEEN THE ROCKS. I LISTENED TO THE SNOW HISS ALONG MY FEET. HOW FLOWERS BLOOM INTO CLOUD SPIRALS OF SNOW AND ICE FRAGMENTS. I WALKED PAST THEM. I CAME TO BE TRULY EXALTED. I HEADED WHERE MY LEGS TOOK ME AND I SUDDENLY FELT THE FIRST SIGNS OF FATIGUE AFTER THE NINE DAYS OF PREPARATION FOR A RUTHLESS LIFE AND DEATH FIGHT WITH THE DRAGON CALLED KINGU. HIS ROAR BROUGHT ME TO HEEL EVERY TIME. I WENT IN THE DIRECTION HE WAS YELLING FROM. IT WAS UPHILL AROUND THE ROCKS UNDER MY LEATHER BOOTS IT WAS SLIDING. I HAD TO PUT A LOT OF SUPPORT IN MY FEET AND THIGHS. I USED MY LEFT HAND TO COVER MY FACE AS I FELT HOT ON IT. I KNEW WHERE I WAS HEADING, LUCKILY THERE WAS A LARGE ROCK THAT PROVIDED ENOUGH PROTECTION. WHEN I REACHED HIM, I SAW A PATH TO THE EAST OF HIM, A SHORT ONE, LEADING TO A

CAVE FROM WHICH A PRIMAL ROAR WAS HEARD. MY WHOLE BODY TINGLED. WHAT WERE THOSE SOUNDS? I REACHED FOR MY SHOULDER. I HAD SWORD NEEDLES HANGING FROM IT. I PULLED ONE OUT AND HELD IT CLOSE TO MY BODY. TIGHT TO PULL THROUGH THAT PASS. THE CLOSER I GOT TO THE SLUICE, THE MORE A DEEP PANIC SEIZED ME. THE WIND BLEW THROUGH THE PASS AROUND ME, RINGING MY EARS. I FINALLY SLEPT OUT OF MY HIATUS. I FACED A DARK DANK CAVERN FROM WHICH A HIDEOUS AND HIDEOUS ROAR EMANATED. WHAT STICKS OUT OF THE DARKNESS? RED SCALY SNAKESKIN DAZZLING AS IF OOZING WITH ENERGY. I STRAIGHTENED MY SWORD.

THE FIGURE CAME OUT OF THE DARKNESS ALREADY WHOLE. A DEMONIC WARRIOR LASHED WITH TONGUES OF FIRE THAT HAD JUST COME OUT OF HIS MOUTH ABOVE US BOTH. I WAS REALLY CONFUSED. THIS WAS NO ORDINARY DRAGON. IT WAS KINGU. A DRAGON WITH A MALE BODY FORM. ONLY WITH A THIRD EYE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOREHEAD. AROUND HIS NECK WAS A BELT MADE OF TWELVE BLACK

MINERAL PLATES. I READ ABOUT THOSE, THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO CONTAIN ALL THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE UNIVERSE. THESE ARE TO CAUSE THE RETURN OF THE HUMAN RACE TO HUMANITY AMONG THEMSELVES LEADING TO TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE. HE HELD HIS TRIDENT IN HIS HANDS. HE SPOKE TO ME WITH HIS UNSTOPPABLE THIRD EYE GAZE, HIS DRAGON TEETH GLINTING AT ME. A BALL OF SNAKES SWARMED AROUND HIS HANDS, COILING ALONG THE LENGTH OF HIS HAND. THE BEAST MEASURED ME FROM A DISTANCE TO SEE IF ITS TRIDENT COULD REACH ME. I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED THAT HE WOULD TRY TO DO SO IMMEDIATELY. AND HE DID. WITH HIS MUSCULAR AND POWERFULLY SNAKE-WRAPPED HAND, HE ATTACKED AT THE COMING MOMENT. THANKS TO MY TIMING, THE TRIDENT FLEW A METER FROM MY HEAD. I JUST DODGED. AND AT THAT MOMENT I ATTACKED. A THIN SWORD STABBED INTO THE DRAGON'S NAVEL. UNDER THE SCALES. THERE WAS A TREMENDOUS ROAR AND A LIGHT THIN SWORD HUNG FROM THE MINE'S NAVEL. I QUICKLY REACHED FOR ANOTHER ONE. MY

NEMESIS WAS ALREADY INSANE AND HE WAS ALSO WOUNDED. HE JERKED HIS HAND VIOLENTLY AND HIS TRIDENT THREW ME WITH ITS BLUNT SIDE AGAINST THE WALL OF THE ROCK RELIEF. I LANDED ON MY CHEST IN MY LEATHER ARMOR AND MY SWORDS SLAMMED INTO MY BACK. TWO EVEN SLIPPED IN FRONT OF MY HEAD, WHICH ALSO HIT ME. I GRABBED THEM BOTH IN MY HANDS AND STOOD UP. I SAW HIS FOOT AND THE TRIDENT APPROACHING ME. HE WAS LARGER THAN THE AVERAGE MAN. IN AN INSTANT I ROLLED OVER TO AVOID HIM. IMMEDIATELY BEHIND ME, HIS HEAVY FOOT LANDED ON THE SPOT WHERE I LAY AND THE BARBS OF HIS TRIDENT BLUNTED AGAINST THE ROCKY GROUND. IN AN INSTANT I TRIED TO THRUST BOTH SWORDS INTO THE WEAK SPOT ON HIS LOWER ABDOMEN WHERE ONE OF MY SWORDS WAS ALREADY STICKING OUT. UNFORTUNATELY, HE MOVED AND ONLY ONE OF THEM HIT THAT SPOT. THE OTHER SLID DOWN THE SCALES TO THE GROUND. KINGA ROARED! I ALREADY HAD THE PENULTIMATE SWORD REPLENISHED AND I WAS WAITING FOR THE

WOUNDED KINGU TO ATTACK SO THAT I COULD COVER HIS LUNGE WITH A COUNTERATTACK. KINGU SWUNG HIS TRIDENT FROM ABOVE AND ONE OF THE SPIKES CAUGHT MY SWORD IN MY HAND AND KNOCKED IT OUT. I TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THAT MOMENT AND IN A JUMP I STUCK THE THIRD NEEDLE UNDER THE SCALES IN THE NAVEL AREA OF THE DRAGON. HE ROARED AND THEN SMACKED ME IN THE FACE WITH HIS SNAKE-UNWRAPPED PAW. HE KNOCKED ME TO THE GROUND AND IN THAT SECOND PAIN LIKE NEVER BEFORE WENT THROUGH ME. I REACHED OUT FOR THE LAST SWORD IN THE ONLY FREE MOMENT. KINGU RAISED HIS TRIDENT AT ME TO IMPALE ME ON HIM. BUT IN THAT SPLIT SECOND, I REVEALED THE LAST PLACE TO SINK MY NEEDLE. RAISING HIS TRIDENT HANDS, THE SCALES ON HIS CHEST BRISTLED, REVEALING HIS VULNERABLE CLEFT. THE PIERCING WAS CLEAN AND GRACEFUL. THE DRAGON'S HEART WAS PIERCED. KINGU STOPPED MOVING AND FELL WITH ALL HIS DEAD WEIGHT TO THE HARD GROUND BEHIND HIM. I GOT UP. I TRIUMPHANTLY TORE HIS NECKLACE OF BLACK

COLORED MINERAL PLATES FROM HIS NECK. AT THAT MOMENT, A LIGHT FLASHED IN THE SLUSH IN FRONT OF ME THAT KINGU HAD CLIMBED OUT OF. I MADE MY WAY THERE WITH A CAUTIOUS STEP. INSIDE THE CAVE GLOWED A STONE PORTAL DECORATED WITH RELIEFS OF STRANGE SYMBOLS. I TOUCHED THEM. HE PONDERED THEIR MEANING. A LONG TIME PASSED BEFORE I DARED TO STEP INSIDE TO FACE ANOTHER ADVENTURE AFTER A DUEL WITH A DRAGON, I KEPT IN MIND NOT TO END UP WITH THE SAME FATE AS THE SERPENT GOD ASAG, WHO WAS IMMORTAL AND THEREFORE WAS EVENTUALLY IMPRISONED IN THE MOUNTAIN THAT EVENTUALLY BECAME HIS TOMB.

ALTERNATE ENDING

DARAGONGARU WAS A JAPANESE GIRL WHO HAD RECENTLY RISEN FROM THE ASHES IN REFUGIO AND WAS IMMEDIATELY TAKEN IN BY ONE OF THE MASTER DRAGON SLAYERS. SHE HAD GUN PRACTICE TONIGHT AND WAS REALLY HUNGRY. WHAT SHE HAD LEARNED ABOUT THE ASYLUM SO FAR WAS THAT THERE WERE USUALLY NO WOMEN HERE. THAT'S WHY SHE ALSO DECIDED TO TRY TO HIDE HER IDENTITY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. MAINLY BECAUSE SHE LIKED A CERTAIN YOUNG EUROPEAN-LOOKING DRAGON SLAYER WITH RIDICULOUSLY CROPPED FOREHEAD HAIR. SHE WAS SURE THAT THIS WAS NOT A PLACE WHERE ONE COULD SHOW FEELINGS OR SYMPATHY FOR SOMEONE. AT LEAST SHE STILL WASN'T CONVINCED OF THAT. BUT WHAT SHE WAS ALSO AWARE OF WAS THAT SHE DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE LANGUAGE OF ALL THE PEOPLE STAYING HERE. ONLY TO THOSE FROM A SIMILAR LANGUAGE RANGE. SO SHE CAME TO THE DINING ROOM. PORK STUFFED WITH APPLES WAS JUST ROASTED. OF COURSE, THAT MEANT IT

WOULD BE FOUR HOURS BEFORE THEY SPIKED ANOTHER PORTION OF SOMETHING MANAGEABLE. SO SHE WAS LEFT WITH BITS OF BONE, BUT SHE DIDN'T COMPLAIN. SHE PICKED THE BONES AND SAW THE YOUNG MAN AGAIN IN THE CROWD. SHE STOPPED. FOR A MOMENT SHE CONSIDERED WHETHER SHE SHOULD GO OUT TO EAT. BUT HER MASTER JUST SAT DOWN. -„SO DARAGONGAR, HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE STORY OF THE DRAGON BIDA?" -„NO, NOT YET." -„EVERYTHING TOOK PLACE IN THE CITY OF WAGADU, WHERE GOLDEN RAIN ALWAYS FELL THREE TIMES A YEAR. GOLD COINS WERE ALWAYS LITERALLY RAINING DOWN ON THE CITY. THE DRAGON BíDA WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS WITH HIS CONVENTION OF THE MAYOR OF LAGARRE. HE SACRIFICED TEN GIRLS TO THE DRAGON EVERY YEAR. BUT AFTER A WHILE THIS COULD BURST AND LAGARREHO WAS AFRAID OF DISCLOSURE. SO HE TRIED TO PLEAD WITH THE DRAGON WITH THE HELP OF THE WISE KOLIKO, THE WISE ELDER OF THE CITY. THE DRAGON BIDA AGREED, BUT AT THE PRICE HE CHOSE THE LIFE OF KOLIKOO. THE CITY THUS

LOST A SAGE, BUT A NEW CONVENTION APPLIED - ONE GIRL A YEAR AND THE SHOWER OF GOLD STILL CONTINUED THREE TIMES A YEAR. THAT'S HOW LAGARRE COULD CONTINUE. FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS, NOTHING SERIOUS HAPPENED. BUT IT WAS DECIDED TO SACRIFICE SIA JATTA BARI AT THE REQUEST OF BIDI HIMSELF. SHE WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRL IN TOWN. HER WEDDING WAS COMING SOON, SO SHE DECIDED TO AT LEAST BE SACRIFICED IN HER WEDDING DRESS. BUT ONE MAN FROM THE TOWN LOVED HER MORE THAN HER TO-BE. HIS NAME WAS MAMADI AND HE'S STANDING OVER THERE BY THE WAY," THE DRAGON SLAYER POINTED AT THE PERSON. -„MAMADI!" HE CALLED OUT TO HIM. THE MAN TURNED AND SLOWLY APPROACHED THEM. -„MAMADI, PLEASE TELL US HOW YOU KILLED THAT DRAGON." -„WELL, HE ALWAYS HAD A HABIT OF STICKING HIS HEAD OUT OF THE CAVE THREE TIMES, AND ON THE FOURTH TIME HE ATE THE GIRL. I WAS HIDDEN BEHIND A BUSH NEAR THE STAKE TO WHICH THE GIRL WAS TIED. I ATTACKED THE DRAGON AT THE LAST MOMENT. I HIT HIM IN

THE SKULL BEHIND THE NECK WITH THE MACE. THE DRAGON BEGAN TO SQUIRM AND REVEAL ITS FULL FORM. HE LOOKED LIKE A WORM, HE WAS A WURM. HE CURSED THE CITY WITH HIS DRAGON'S TONGUE AND THEN HUFFED. GOLDEN RAIN NEVER FELL ON THE CITY AGAIN, AND THE PEOPLE CHASED ME AND SIL OUT OF THE CITY. UNFORTUNATELY, SIA DIDN'T LOVE ME EVEN THOUGH I SAVED HER LIFE AND LOVED HER. SHE BETRAYED ME AND RAN AWAY TO ANOTHER CITY. FROM THEN UNTIL THE END OF MY DAYS I LIVED ALONE." -„WHY ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THIS TOO?" SHE ASKED DARAGONGARU.

-„TO KNOW WHAT DESTINIES YOU LEAVE BEHIND." -„YOU THROW ALL WOMEN IN ONE BAG." -„NOT THAT. I'M JUST AFRAID THAT YOUR EXISTENCE MIGHT BE DANGEROUS TO THE ENTIRE REFUGIUM. WHERE THE DEVIL CAN'T, HE WILL PUT A WOMAN IN." "THEN I'M NOT GOING TO LISTEN TO THIS," DARAGONGARA SAID. -„WAIT. THIS IS NOT THE END," HE SPOKE TO HER AND SHE TURNED AGAIN. -„I EVEN TRIED TO POISON HER WITH A WITCH'S POTION TO

MAKE HER FALL IN LOVE WITH ME, BUT IT DIDN'T WORK OUT AND SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE ELSE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE POTION EXPIRED AND WHEN SIA FELL INTO HERSELF AGAIN, SHE HATED HERSELF FOR LOVING A STRANGER AND KILLED HERSELF." DARAGONGARA JUST SMIRKED AND WAGGLED HER ASS OUTSIDE WHERE SHE CALMLY ATE. THESE WERE THE VERY THINGS SHE HATED. AFTER DINNER SHE RETIRED TO HER BED WHERE SHE LOOKED AT THE STARS FROM HER BED. SHE HAD LESSONS THE NEXT MORNING. -„SO WHAT KIND OF DRAGONS DO WE HAVE HERE? -„DRAGONS BLACK. YOU ARE GRUMPY. THEY PREFER TO LIVE IN SWAMPS, WETLANDS AND HARD-TO-REACH PLACES LIKE JUNGLES. THE MAIN FEATURES OF THESE DRAGONS ARE THEIR DEEP EYE SOCKETS AND HUGE HORNS COMING OUT OF THEIR CHEEKBONES. THEIR HEADS ARE DECORATED WITH SMALLER HORNS AND SPINES. THEY HAVE SIMILAR TEETH TO CROCODILES. PLUS THEY HAVE CAUSTIC SALIVA. IT PREFERS LIVE MOLLUSCS, FISH AND AQUATIC ANIMALS. THEY LOVE TREASURES. HUMAN VICTIMS ARE

FIRST HELD CAPTIVE AND THEN EATEN. NEXT, THE BLUE DRAGONS. THEY ARE VAIN CREATURES, PROTECTING THEIR OWN TERRITORIES. THEY PREFER HOT, DRY PLACES AND DESERTS. THEY ARE WILD AND LIVE TO FIGHT. THEY CAN'T STAND COWARDS. THEY OFTEN DIG UNDERGROUND DENS. THEY HAVE LARGE LEATHERY EARS, A LARGE HORN PROTRUDING FROM THEIR FOREHEAD. THEIR NOSTRILS ARE CLOSE TO THEIR EYES AND THEY HAVE A BLUNT SNOUT. ALONG THE NOSTRILS AND SUPRAORBITAL ARCHES, THEY HAVE SMALL HORNED PROTRUSIONS. A BEARD GROWS FROM THE HORNS UNDER THEIR CHINS. LIGHTNING STRIKES. THEY LOVE GEMS. THEN WE HAVE RED DRAGONS. THEY ARE GREEDY AND WANT TO INCREASE THEIR TREASURE MORE AND MORE. THEY PREFER MOUNTAINS OR HARD-TO-REACH AREAS HIGH UP FROM WHERE THEY CAN OBSERVE THEIR TERRITORY. LIKE THE DENS OF VOLCANIC CAVES. THEY HAVE TWO MASSIVE BACKWARD-CURLING HORNS ON THE TOP OF THEIR HEADS. THEY HAVE A LARGE RING WITH PROTRUSIONS ON THEIR CHEEKS, AS WELL AS ON

THEIR CHIN AND MUZZLE. EVEN THEIR EYE SOCKETS ARE LINED WITH SMALL HORNS. THEY HAVE A SHARP RIDGE ALL THE WAY DOWN THEIR SPINE TO THEIR TAIL. THEY ARE EVIL AND FIERY. THEY KNOW HOW TO TAKE REVENGE AND ARE UNCONTROLLABLY WILD. THEY HAVE THE GREATEST TREASURES OF ALL DRAGONS AND KNOW THEM BY HEART. IT IS ENOUGH FOR THEM TO LOSE ONE COIN AND THEY ALREADY KNOW.

HUMANS AND ELVES HAVE A FAVORITE FOOD. MORE GREEN DRAGONS. THEY ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS MASTER SCHEMERS. THEY ARE NOT SUPPORTERS OF A DIRECT FIGHT FOR HONOR. THEY AGGRESSIVELY ATTACK ANYONE AT THE SLIGHTEST PROVOCATION. THEY RESIDE IN OLD WOODS, CAVES, STEEP CLIFFS OR HILLSIDES. THEIR MAGIC IS FOCUSED ON PLANTS AND EVERYTHING AROUND THEM. THEIR DOMINANT FEATURE IS THEIR LONG NECKS. THEY ALSO HAVE LARGE CRESTS AND SUPRAORBITAL PROCESSES. THEY ARE OMNIVORES, THEY ALSO EAT PLANTS. HOWEVER, SPRITES ARE A DELICACY FOR THEM. THEIR FAVORITE ATTACK

IS CHLORINE BREATH. I CAN CONTINUE WITH WHITE DRAGONS. THEY ARE USUALLY SMALLER IN STATURE AND NOT AS SMART AS THEIR LARGER COUNTERPARTS, BUT THEY ARE STILL DETERMINED HUNTERS. THEY HAVE A SMOOTH HEAD WITH A BEAK-LIKE MOUTH. THEY HAVE SMALL GROWTHS FROM THEIR CHIN ALL THE WAY UP THEIR NECK, AS WELL AS THEIR ENTIRE CREST, WHICH IS FULL OF SHARK FIN-LIKE GROWTHS. THEY HAVE STRONG LARGE SCALES. THESE DRAGONS LIVE MAINLY IN THE COLD ARCTIC CLIMATE. THEY LIKE FROZEN FOOD. THEY LOVE CLEAR GEMS BECAUSE THEY REMIND THEM OF ICE. WHEN PROVOKED TO ATTACK THEY USE ICY BREATH. FINALLY, GOLDEN DRAGONS. THEY ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR STRONG SENSE OF JUSTICE. THEY FIGHT AGAINST EVIL, WHICH THEY USUALLY DEFEAT. THEY LIVE ANYWHERE, PREFERRING STONE DENS WITH SEVERAL ROOMS. THEY CAN COMMUNICATE WITH ANIMALS, SO THEY ALSO OFTEN WARN THEM WHEN THEY SENSE DANGER. IN APPEARANCE, THEY HAVE LOTS AND LOTS OF HORNS ALL OVER THEIR BODIES. THEIR MOUTHS ARE

DECORATED WITH MALE WHISKERS. HE CAN TAKE HUMAN AND ANIMAL FORM. THEY ARE THE RAREST OF DRAGONS, AS WELL AS BEING CONSIDERATE AND VERY PATIENT. THEY ARE EXCELLENT LISTENERS AND MENTORS. THEY ARE WISE. THEY ACT FIRST BEFORE FIGHTING. IF IT COMES TO A FIGHT, HE ALWAYS WINS. THEIR TREASURES TEND TO BE WORKS OF ART. THEY ARE ALSO CLOSE TO SILVER AND PLATINUM DRAGONS." -„OKAY, AND WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THEM IS THAT THEY LIKE COMPANY AND OFTEN TAKE HUMAN FORM. THEY CANNOT STAND INJUSTICE AND CRUELTY. RATHER THAN PERSECUTION, HOWEVER, THEY ARE CLOSER TO PROTECTING THE INNOCENT AND HEALING THE WOUNDED. WELL, THAT'S ENOUGH FOR TODAY. YOU CAN GO TO DINNER," THE MASTER INFORMED HER. SO SHE WENT TO THE BANQUET HALL. YOU REACHED THE ROASTING MEAT. THIS TIME IT WAS KIND OF HARD AND THE SHAPE ALSO DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING SHE HAD EATEN HERE UNTIL NOW. IT LOOKED LIKE ONE BIG PIECE OF SHAPELESS MEAT. SHE ALREADY KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG. SHE THEN TOOK A

BITE. YUCK!
SHE SPAT IT OUT AFTER A FEW MORE BITES. -„YOUNG LADY, CHERISH THE DRAGON FOOD, IT IS A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO TASTE SOMETHING NEW," THE MAN NEXT TO HER SPOKE TO HER. IT WAS OVERGROWN AND HUNG WITH EXPENSIVE ACCESSORIES. SHE WAS SILENT. -„COME ON GILGAMESH, DO YOU REMEMBER HOW WE KILLED HUMBABA TOGETHER?" SOMEONE SPOKE TO HIM. -„YOU KNOW THAT, ENKIDUEI," ANSWERED THE MAN. THE TWO LAUGHED AT THIS BY THE FIRE WITH THE MEAT. DARAGONGARA TOOK HER BOWL OF PIECES OF MEAT AND SAT DOWN SOMEWHERE BY HERSELF. AFTER A WHILE OF NIBBLING ON THE EDGES OF THE HOT MEAT, SHE REALIZED SHE WAS BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES SHE HEARD AROUND HER. -„ PITAKA! HOW DID YOU KILL KATAOR?" SHE HEARD STRANGE VOICES IN THE ROOM. -„GIRL?" HER TRAINER SAT DOWN NEXT TO HER. -„HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF ST. MARTHA?" -„NO, AND YOU'D BETTER NOT EVEN TELL ME," HE DIPPED HIS GAZE AGAIN INTO THE BOWL OF DINNER.-„YOU WILL DEFINITELY LIKE

THE LEGEND. ST. MARTHA ENCHANTED THE DRAGON AND MANAGED HIM TO THE NEAREST VILLAGE, WHERE THE PEOPLE CHARGED HIM." -„AND ARE THOSE PEOPLE HERE NOW? WHEN THERE ARE DRAGON SLAYERS?" -„IT'S ALSO A MYSTERY TO ME, BUT NO. I GUESS THE ENERGY FROM THE DRAGON SPREAD AMONG THE VILLAGERS, BUT NOT A SINGLE ONE GOT TO THE REFUGIO." -„STRANGE." -„MANY THINGS ARE STRANGE. MAYBE YOU'RE THE ONLY REFUGIA GIRL HERE." -„REALLY THE ONLY ONE? NOT EVEN SAINT MARTHA HERE?" -„YES INDEED. I GUESS AKASHA HIMSELF SENT YOU HERE FOR THE REASON THAT YOU ALSO EXPLAIN IT TO US." -„THERE WAS NEVER ANY OTHER DRAGON SLAYER? -„I'VE HEARD A LOT OF RUMORS ABOUT GIRLS THAT HAD A LOT TO DO WITH DRAGONS, BUT I HAVEN'T MET ONE YET. EXCEPT FOR YOU, OF COURSE." DARAGONGARA FROWNED AT THE IMPACT OF HIS REPLY. HER FACE SHOWED HELPLESS LONELINESS. STARING INTO THE BOWL OF FOOD, THE ONLY THING SHE TRIED TO PAY ATTENTION TO WAS HER EARS,

WHICH WERE SLOWLY DISTINGUISHING INDIVIDUAL SYLLABLES AND WORDS IN THE NOISE AROUND IN THE ROOM. -„BUT I HEARD A STORY ABOUT RIYO, A GIRL FROM A TEA HOUSE, WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH A YOUNG PRIEST AND UNINTENTIONALLY LED HIM AWAY FROM THE PATH OF GOD. BUT WHEN THE PRIEST REALIZED THIS AFTER SOME TIME, HE DECIDED TO RETURN TO THE TEMPLE OF HIS FAITH. BUT IT BROKE RIYA'S HEART AND SHE DECIDED TO GO HER OWN WAY - THE SECRET OF TURNING INTO A DRAGON. FOR MANY YEARS SHE PRACTICED THE DISTANT STUDIES OF DRAGON MAGIC AND THE DAY SHE REALLY TURNED INTO A DRAGON SHE FLEW BACK TO HER EX'S TEMPLE AND IN ALL THE AGGRESSION OF THE RED DRAGON'S POWER DESTROYED THE ENTIRE TEMPLE AND HER EX WITH IT. THEN SHE FLEW AWAY AND WAS NEVER HEARD FROM OR SEEN AGAIN."

-„AND THAT'S SUPPOSED TO HELP ME CHANGE INTO A DRAGON?" -„NO, IT'S JUST THAT SUCH FATES ALSO HAPPEN," HER MASTER ANSWERED HER. SHE TOOK A BITE OF HER DINNER IN SILENCE AND SWALLOWED IT LIKE THE FACT THE

COACH HAD JUST TOLD HER. -„LISTEN!" SOMEONE SHOUTED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM. DARAGONGARA LOOKED BACK. THERE WAS A MAN STANDING THERE, AND BEHIND HIM WAS CUTTING A PIECE OF MEAT FROM THE SPIT, AND THE YOUNG BOY WITH A TERRIBLE HAIRCUT. WHY DOES HE KEEP GETTING IN HER WAY? -„I WANT TO TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT THE DRAGON OF KOSHI," CONTINUED THE ELDER, WHO ADDRESSED THE ENTIRE FEAST.-„I TELL YOU STRAIGHT AWAY THAT I, SUSAWONA, KILLED HIM. IT WAS THEN THAT I MET A STRANGE MOTHER AND FATHER LEADING THEIR LAST DAUGHTER TO BE A VICTIM OF BLACKMAIL AND COERCION TO THE DRAGON. I HAD TO STEP IN. I LIKED HER AND IT SEEMED THAT I PUT A SMILE ON HER FACE WITH MY INTEREST. THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED THAT IF I KILLED THE DRAGON, I WOULD WIN HER HAND AND HER HEART. WE SPENT THE WHOLE NIGHT BREWING THE SAKE POTION TOGETHER. ACCORDING STATEMENT, THE DRAGON HAD EIGHT HEADS. SO IT WAS A SLEIGH. PERHAPS EVEN HYDRA HERSELF. SO THEY FILLED EIGHT BARRELS, AND

AS THE SLEIGH WENT AROUND SHE PUT HER HEAD INTO EACH OF THE BARRELS AND IT GOT HER DRUNK. THAT MORNING I APPEARED AT THE DRAGON AND STABBED DRAGON IN THE LOWER ABDOMEN. I STEAMED HIS INTESTINES OUT. I SAVED THE GIRL, HE HAD A WEDDING WITH HER, D CHILDREN AND LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER...AND NOW I'M HERE. I WILL TOAST YOU MY BROTHERS!" HE RAISED HIS GOBLET AND DRANK MEAD TO EVERYONE IN THE HALL. -„LET'S DRINK," SAID SOMEONE ELSE IN AN AUTHORITATIVE VOICE, AND EVEN THE NEGLECTED GLASSES WERE RAISED. AFTER THAT, DARAGONGARA WENT TO HER CHAMBER. BUT ON THE WAY THERE SHE RAN INTO THE BOY, EXACTLY WHAT SHE DIDN'T WANT. JUST A LOOK WAS ENOUGH AND IT VIBRATED HER WHOLE ORGANISM. SHE THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALL NIGHT AND COULDN'T SLEEP. SHE LOOKED AT THE STARS, SHE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ASTRONOMY. SHE HAD A BODY WORKOUT IN THE MORNING. SHE WAS DOING GIRLY SIT-UPS AND STRETCHING ON A WOODEN BAR. SO FAR, HER TRAINER HAD TOLD HER THAT HE HAD HEARD THE STORY OF

PAI LUNG, A DRAGON BORN TO A GIRL FROM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION. SHE WAS GIFTED WITH A DRAGON. UNFORTUNATELY, SHE DIED DURING CHILDBIRTH AND ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF HER WAS A WHITE DRAGON. IN HONOR OF THIS, THE PEOPLE BUILT A TEMPLE FOR THAT DRAGON ON THE SPOT AND WENT THERE TO WORSHIP IT. "I DON'T KNOW WHY THEY WORSHIPED HIM WHEN SHE DIED BECAUSE OF HIM."

-„BECAUSE SHE GAVE BIRTH TO HIM, THAT'S THE FATE OF WOMEN." "ONLY THE ORDINARY ONES," SHE ANSWERED HIM. THE END OF THE DAY CAME AND SHE WENT TO THE BANQUETING HALL AGAIN FOR DINNER. AN EVENT THAT TOOK PLACE AGES AGO WAS BEING DISCUSSED THERE. BEFORE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT TODAY, THE WORLD WAS RULED BY THE GOD INDRA. HE WAS THE BRINGER OF RAIN. HE HAD ONLY ONE ENEMY - THE GOD VRITRA. VRITRA WAS A GREAT LIMBLESS DRAGON HOLDING BACK ALL THE WATER OF THE HEAVENS. INDRA HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO KILL VRITRA. HE USED LIGHTNING AS A WEAPON

AND RODE A SOLAR CHARIOT AROUND THE EARTH AROUND WHICH VRITRA WAS SPREAD. THEY FOUGHT FOR A LONG TIME UNTIL HE MANAGED TO HIT VRITRA IN THE GROIN ON THE LOWER ABDOMEN WITH LIGHTNING. THE DRAGON FELL TO THE GROUND AND SPLASHED ALL THE WATER INSIDE HIM. THUS CAME THE SEA AND THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT NOW." THERE WAS A MOMENT WHEN SHE HAD THE FEELING THAT THE BOY WAS IN THERE SOMEWHERE. SOMEWHERE AROUND THE BACK WITH OTHER DRAGON SLAYERS. AND SO WITH A BOWL OF FOOD, WHICH THE PIGLET FINALLY FILLED WITH SLICES, SHE WENT TO SIT OUTSIDE UNDER THE ROOF. BUILDINGS OF NORDIC ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS MADE OF SOLID WOOD. SHE SAT EATING AND LISTENING TO THE RAIN. -„SORRY. AM I NOT DISTURBING?" A VOICE THAT STARTLED HER CAME FROM BEHIND HER. HE WASN'T REALLY THAT CREEPY. IT WAS THE VOICE OF THE BOY WITH THE RIDICULOUS HAIRDO. SHE KNEW IT WITHOUT EVEN TURNING AROUND. NOW YOU'RE RUNNING. SHE WAS SILENT, LOOKING OUT AT THE FOOTHILLS AROUND,

COVERED IN DRIZZLE. THE BOY WAS ALREADY STANDING NEXT TO HER. -„STRANGELY. YOU STILL HAVEN'T GONE TO KILL YOUR DRAGON?" -„I ABDICATED." -„NO DRAGON SLAYING?" -„NO. HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT HOW YOU GOT HERE?" -„FROM THE ASHES." -„YES, BUT WHY? ARE YOU A DRAGON SLAYER?" -„WELL, PROBABLY YES, IF I'M TOUGH WITH YOU," SHE SAID WITH A PRICKLY SMILE. ALFRED WAS STARTLED AT FIRST AND THEN LAUGHED. "YOU'RE RIGHT, THAT'S HOW IT IS," HE SAID AND THEN DISAPPEARED THE SAME WAY HE APPEARED. DARAGONGARA FINISHED HER MEAL AND WENT TO HER CHAMBER, WHERE SHE FELL COMFORTABLY ASLEEP. SHE THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO KILL THE DRAGON. HE STOOD IN FRONT OF HER AND SPREAD HIS WINGS. HE SET HIS NECK TO EAT HER, BUT WHEN SHE SLASHED HIS EYES, HE CHANGED HIS MIND. THE DRAGON AND HIS NAME FLEW AROUND. YOFUNE-NUSHI. HE UNHAPPILY SHOWED HER HIS VULNERABLE SPOT ON HIS LOWER ABDOMEN. SHE STABBED HIM THERE WITH HER SAMURAI

SWORD AND HIS BLOOD SPLATTERED HER FACE. SHE IMMEDIATELY STARTED GROWING SCALES ON THAT SPOT.

AT THAT SECOND SHE WOKE UP. YOFUNE-NUSHI? THE NAME WAS STILL IN FRONT OF HER EYES. SHE HAD GUN PRACTICE TODAY. -„COACH. DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT A DRAGON NAMED YOFUNE-NUSHI?" -„YES, I KNOW THAT NAME. HE WAS KILLED BY A GIRL FROM OKI ISLAND. HOWEVER, THE GIRL'S NAME REMAINED UNKNOWN. IT IS ONLY KNOWN THAT SHE WAS FROM TOKYO. WHY?" -„I THINK IT WAS ME IN A PAST LIFE." -„YOU? DARAGONGAR?" -„YES." -„INTERESTINGLY. HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THAT?" -„I THOUGHT ABOUT IT." -„AH, THAT EXPLAINS A LOT. OUR FIRST DRAGON SLAYER. I AM HONORED, OUR QUEEN," HE BOWED TO HER FOR A MOMENT BEFORE STANDING UP AGAIN. -„NOW START PRACTICING, HERE'S YOUR KATANA," HE HANDED HER HER WEAPON. IT ALSO MATCHED THE WEAPON IN THE DREAM. DARAGONGARA FOUGHT ALL EIGHT WOODEN SHOTS AT ONCE. SHE RAN BETWEEN THEM IN

HER KIMONO EMBROIDERED WITH GOLDEN DRAGONS, CLUTCHING HER WEAPON WITH BOTH HANDS. ITS CUTTING SIDE AIMED AT THE PLACES THAT WERE CONNECTED - ARMPITS, SHOULDERS, NECK. SHE WAS FAST AND DEADLY. SHE HAD PERFECT INSIGHT INTO THE WEAPON'S BALANCE. IT WAS ENOUGH TO ADD A FEW UNITS OF ENERGY AND SHE COULD NONCHALANTLY CUT A PIECE OF WOOD FROM THE TRAINER. -„OKAY, THAT WOULD BE ENOUGH. USE MORE OF YOUR KUNDALINI - SNAKE POWER. COSMIC ENERGY FLOWING THROUGH MAN. HER CENTER IS RIGHT HERE, IN THE SACRUM," THE TRAINER SAID, POINTING TO HER. -„HAVE YOU TRIED SHURIKENS YET? -„NO."-„SO HERE THEY ARE." DARAGONGARA TOOK THE SHURIKENS IN HER HANDS AND STARTED THROWING THEM AT THE WOODEN TARGETS IN FIGURE FORM. THE FORCE WITH WHICH SHE THREW THE SHURIKENS MADE EACH OF THEM STICK ONE OF THEIR TIPS INTO THE CENTER OF THE TARGET.-„YOU ARE A VERY TALENTED DRAGON SLAYER, DARAGONGARA," HE PRAISED HER COACH. SHE NODDED SILENTLY, BUT HER FACE SHOWED THAT IT MADE HER HAPPY.

-„HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE UKTEN AND THE TIANUHWA?" -„NOT YET," SHE REPLIED.-„THE UKTEN USED TO BE GIANT SNAKES WITH CZECH MULTI-COLORED SCALY SKIN. THEY ALSO HAD WINGS AND ANTLERS LIKE DEER. EACH OF THESE DRAGONS HAD A GEM CALLED AN ULUNSUTI IN THEIR HEAD. THEY WERE THE SOURCE OF A POWERFUL SPELL THAT COULD MAKE HIS OWNER TO PASS BETWEEN THIS WORLD AND THE UNDERWORLDTHIS WAS ALSO DUE TO THE FACT THAT THEY LIVED IN A COMPLEX OF CAVE PASSAGES UNDER THE LAKES. THE TIANUHWAS USED TO BE GIANT HAWKS WITH A REDDISH COLOR ALL OVER THEIR BODIES. THESE BIRDS RESIDED NEAR WATERS, JUST LIKE HUMANS. THE BIGGER HUNTERS EAT THE SMALLER ONES, SO THE TLANUHWA BEGAN SWOOPING DOWN INTO THE VILLAGE AND CARRYING OFF THE CHILDREN TO EAT. THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE HAD TO STEP IN. AN EXPEDITION WENT TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD TO FIND A NEST. ONE MAN SAW A FEATHERED DRAGON FLY INTO THE HIGH ROCKS WHERE THE CAVES USED TO BE. THE MEN WENT INTO THEM.

THEY FOUND THE CHILDREN IN THE DENS, FORTUNATELY STILL ALIVE. THERE WERE ALSO EGGS AND THEY DECIDED TO DESTROY THEM. THEY WERE THROWN OUT OF THE NESTS UNDER WHICH THE LAKE WAS. AT THAT MOMENT, A FLOCK OF UKTEN WASHED UP FROM IT AND STARTED EATING THE EGGS THAT THE MEN WENT OUT INTO THE LAKE. THIS INFURIATED THE ARRIVING TIANUHWAE, AND THEY TOO PLUNGED HEADLONG INTO BATTLE WITH THE UKTEN. MEANWHILE, THE PEOPLE FROM THE ROCKS RETURNED HOME WITH THEIR CHILDREN TO THE VILLAGE. THE DRAGONS FOUGHT EACH OTHER FOR SEVERAL DAYS. THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE WATCHED AND WERE READY TO DEFEND THEMSELVES IF ANY OF THE DRAGONS ATTACKED THEIR RESIDENCE AGAIN. BUT INSTEAD, PEOPLE SAW THE DRAGONS FLY UP INTO THE CLOUDS IN BATTLE FLOCKS AND THEN DISAPPEAR. IT WASN'T UNTIL A FEW DAYS LATER THAT BLOODY SCALES AND FEATHERS STARTED RAINING FROM THE SKY. HOWEVER, NOT ONE OF THE DRAGONS CAME BACK AGAIN." "THAT'S A TERRIBLE STORY," SAID DARAGONGARA. IT WAS ALREADY

EVENING, SO SHE DECIDED TO WRAP IT UP AND WENT TO THE BANQUET HALL. THERE, IT WAS POSSIBLE TO CUT HER FROM THE CALF. A FULL DAY OF WEAPONS TRAINING WAS TO BLAME. AND THAT'S WHEN THE YOUNG MAN APPEARED NEXT TO HER. -„CAN I HELP YOU CUT THE ROASTED VEAL?" -„THANKS," SHE DROPPED THE LARGE KNIFE STIFFLY IN HER THIGH. THE BOY WRAPPED THE CALLOUSED FINGERS OF ONE HAND AROUND HIM AND GRIPPED THE SIDE OF HIS CALF WITH THE OTHER. WITH SLOW, LONG STROKES, HE CUT OFF THE SLICES OF VEAL. THESE FELL STRAIGHT ONTO DARAGONGARA'S PLATE. SHE TOOK IT OFF AFTER THE FOURTH SLICE AND SAT DOWN. THE BOY LEFT THE KNIFE IN HIS CALF AND CAME TO SIT NEXT TO THE GIRL. -„DO YOU HAVE TIME AFTER DINNER? I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING." -„WHAT'S GOING ON?" -„O DRAGON." -„THAT IT DOESN'T EVEN SURPRISE ME." -„WE MUST SLAY THE DRAGON TOGETHER." -„AND HOW DO YOU WANT TO DO IT?" -„IF WE WANT TO KILL A DRAGON, WE MUST FIRST SUMMON ONE. -„AND HOW DO

WE DO IT? -„I HAVE SUCH A BOOK FOR THAT." DARAGONGARA STOPPED CHEWING. "A BOOK?" -„YES. GRIMOIRE OF THE DRAGON GODDESS TIAMAT." -„WHERE DID YOU GET IT?
-„IN THE LIBRARY." -„DID YOU STEAL HER? ARE YOU A BOOK THIEF?" -„NO. I AM ALFRED THE DRAGON SLAYER." -„I'M A DRAGON GIRL. DARAGONGAR." -„I KNOW," REPLIED ALFRED. -„HOW ... ?" THE GIRL PAUSED AND GLARED AT THE BOY. ALFRED STUFFED HIS MOUTHFUL INTO HIS MOUTH. AFTER DINNER THEY MADE THEIR WAY TO ALFREDS ROOM WHERE HE HAD A DEEP RED LEATHER BOUND BOOK UNDER HIS BED. DRAGON SKIN. -„CAREFUL," HE SAID AND OPENED IT IN HALF. THEY CAME UP WITH REVOCATION FORMULAS. -„WHERE WILL WE PRESENT IT?" SHE ASKED. -„WE HAVE TO GO OUT," SAID ALFRED. -„BUT WE HAVE TO BE VERY CAREFUL. PEOPLE POSSESSED BY DRAGON ENTITIES ARE NOT A PRETTY SIGHT. IT IS USUALLY FATAL," HE ADDED. -„HOW DOES IT MANIFEST ITSELF? SHE ASKED DARAGONGAR. -„THE PERSON IN QUESTION HAS AN

UNCONTROLLABLE SEXUAL AND SADISTIC NEED. EITHER TO YOURSELF OR TO SOMEONE ELSE." DARAGONGARA MERELY SIGHED AT THAT. SO THEY RAN OUT TO THE STONY PLAIN AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN AND HERE THEY PREACHED IN UNISON IN TWO KEYS.
WARRIOR DRAGON FROM THE TEMPLE OF TIAMAT OPEN YOUR WINGS OPEN YOUR EYES LIVE YOUR BREATH PUMP YOUR HEART RISE ON THIS HOLY BLOOD LET IT BE MY BATH AND I WILL RISE FROM YOUR BLOOD WITH SCALY SKIN. THE WIND RACED. THE CLOUDS IN THE OVERCAST SKY MOVED QUICKLY TO REVEAL A MOON THAT ILLUMINATED THE ENTIRE PLAIN. THERE WAS A WAIL FROM THE ROCKS ABOVE THEIR HEADS. THE DRAGON'S CRY ECHOED OFF THE MOUNTAINTOPS WITH A RESONANCE OF SOUND. THE VOICE OF SOME DRAGON SLAYER RANG OUT. -„WHAT DID YOU DO?!" -„WE SUMMONED A DRAGON." -„I KNOW, I HEARD HIM," STUTTERED ST. GEORGE. -„YOU BASTARDS! SUMMONING A DRAGON AT THE WRONG TIME. YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT A BAD CONJUNCTION

CAN DO." -„AFTER ALL, THE EVOCATION WAS SUCCESSFUL!" -„HAVE YOU SEEN THE DRAGON YET? EVOCATION SUCCEEDS EVERY TIME IN REFUGIO. IT'S JUST THAT THE DRAGON SOMETIMES WON'T TAKE THE SHAPE YOU EXPECT."

-„WHAT DO YOU MEAN?" -„AS I SAY! WELL, NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO CLEAN UP WHAT YOU'VE DONE. BRING ON THE BLIZZARDS!" ST. GEORGE SHOUTED TO THE BUILDING, WHERE SEVERAL CURIOUS HEADS WERE LOOKING TO SEE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT. WITHIN MOMENTS, BOTH ALFRED AND DARAGONGARA FOUND THEMSELVES FULLY ARMED IN THEIR LIGHT ARMOR AND ON THEIR WAY TO THE MOUNTAINTOPS. A SERIES OF FUJAR PLAYED BEHIND THEM, LEADING THEM TO A FAIR PORTION OF THE ROCKS. WHERE THE ROCKS WERE NARROW, THEY WENT AROUND IT. IT WAS A PEACEFUL NIGHT. ONLY GUSTS OF WIND GUIDED THEM WHERE THE PILGRIMAGE LED. THE FUJARAS HAVE DIED DOWN. ONLY THEIR BREATHS RHYTHMICALLY ACCOMPANIED THEM. BUT THIS WAS NOT AN EROTIC SCENE. BOTH WERE HEADED FOR POSSIBLE DEATH. BY

THE LOOKS ON EACH OTHER'S FACES, THE EYES SAID THAT THEIR BRAINS HAD THOUGHT OF IT, BUT THEIR EGOS WERE UNAVAILABLE ON EITHER SIDE. SHOW HER A DRAGON OR DRAGON, THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL IT HERE, ALFRED THOUGHT. BUT THEY ARE NOT HERE IN REFUGIO. HERE THEY ARE IN THE ROCKS ON THEIR WAY TO KILL THE DRAGON. THIS DRAGON DOESN'T HAVE A NAME YET. FOR NOW, SHE ONLY HAS AN EVER-CLOSER ECHO OF HIS ROARS FROM THE LAIR. -„WE WILL HAVE TO LIGHT THE BEAMS SOON." -„OR JUST A FIREPLACE." -„AND WHERE?" -„ANYWHERE." "WELL, AT LEAST SOMEWHERE UP THERE, NOT HERE IN THE PASS." -„AND WHY?" "WE WOULD DIE HERE." -„NOT AT ALL, NEVER!" THE GIRL DREW HER KATANA. -„NEVER SAY NEVER. WE WILL DO BETTER IF WE CAMP SOMEWHERE BELOW THE PEAK." -„OK THEN." THEY CONTINUED ON THEIR WAY ACROSS THE ROCKS TOWARDS THE SUMMIT. THERE WAS GRAVEL UNDER THEIR FEET, WHICH THEY DEMOLISHED UNTIL THEY HAD A VIEW FROM THE TOP OF THE SMALL ROOF OF THE REFUGE.

SHE WAS PERHAPS EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL FROM HERE THAN UP CLOSE. IT STOOD OUT IN THIS WAY IN THE INTEGRITY OF ITS DETAILS, LIKE A WOODEN DRAGON FROM THE MAIN BEAM STICKING OUT LIKE GARGOYLES, OR THE MONUMENTALITY OF ITS CHIMNEYS. ALFRED SAT DOWN AND BEGAN TO PREPARE A FIRE WITH FLINT. HE RATTLED AT A PILE OF RATTLES. CUT, CUT, NOTHING. -„SHOW ME, GIVE IT TO ME." THE GIRL SUGGESTED, KNEELING NEXT TO HIM. THEY HANDED HER A FLINT AND SHE TRIED TO MAKE A FIRE. MEANWHILE, ALFRED STOOD LOOKING DOWN AT THE REFUGIA BUILDING. HE FELT THAT HE WAS LOOKING TOWARDS THE BAY WINDOW WHERE HE HAD HIS CHAMBER. HE LOOKED UP AT THE SKY. THE STARS WERE ALREADY VISIBLE, BUT THEN HE HEARD A CRASH BEHIND HIM.

HE LOOKED BACK AND TOOK HIS SWORD IN HIS RIGHT HAND. HE SAW THE DARKNESS OF THE CLOUD AND THE MOVEMENT IN IT SO GREAT THAT HE COULD HARDLY BE SEEN FROM THAT CLOSE. -„ATTENTION!" HE KICKED THE DARAGONGARA WITH HIS FOOT SO THAT SHE

FELL TO THE SIDE AT THE RIGHT MOMENT AS A TONGUE OF FIRE LANDED ON THE SPOT OF THE STILL UNDIVIDED HEARTH IN THE NEXT MOMENT. THE FLAME IMMEDIATELY MELTED THE RUSTLING AND LOGS. DARAGONGARA DREW HER KATANA. BOTH OF THEM NOW FACED SOMEONE OR SOMETHING COMING OUT OF THEIR SLUSH. THE FIRST HEAD CAME OUT FIRST AND THEN THE OTHER. AFTER THEM, GIANT CLAWS ON THE FRONT LEGS. THEN THE BODY AND THE END OF THE TAIL WITH CLAWS AND A POISONOUS SPIKE. -„HE'S A MUTANT!" I EXCLAIMED. -„I NOTICED," DARAGONGARA SAID IN A VOICE PROBABLY ONLY TO HERSELF. EACH HEAD HAD TWO PAIRS OF EYES. THEY SPREAD THEIR GLOW INTO THE NIGHT SO THAT EVEN THE REFLECTION OF THE FIRE DISAPPEARED IN IT. IT WENT OFF. BUT AROUND THE TWO DRAGON SLAYERS AND THE MUTANT DRAGON'S BODY CONTINUED TO BLAZE. HE WAS VERY HELPFUL TO THEM. GOOD SERVANT, BAD MASTER, AS THE SAYING GOES. -„ALFRED, WATCH OUT!" SHE CALLED OUT LOUDLY TO WARN HIM OF THE MUTATED TAIL COMING AT HIM FROM BEHIND

FROM THE SIDE HE COULDN'T SEE. HOWEVER, INSTEAD OF LOOKING BACK, HE LOOKED AT THE GIRL, AND WITH THAT THE DRAGON'S TAIL HIT HIM FULL FORCE WHERE THE YOUNG DRAGON SLAYER'S RIBS WERE. ALFRED FLEW AWAY, LANDING ON THE EDGE OF A ROCK RELIEF, WHERE HE CAUGHT HOLD OF A PROTRUDING ROOT WITH ONE HAND. IN HIS OTHER HAND HE STILL HELD THE NEEDLE-SHAPED CORD. -„ALFRED!" THE GIRL CALLED AS SHE LOST SIGHT OF HIM THROUGH THE DRAGON'S BODY, TRYING TO USE HER SWORD TO FEND OFF THE ATTACKS OF THE POISONED TAIL AND HEAD. THE FIREHEAD WANTED CLOSER TO THE CLIFF WHERE ALFRED HAD FALLEN TO MAKE SURE THE ENEMY WAS DEAD OR HER WORK OF DESTRUCTION NEEDED TO BE FINISHED WITH FIRE BREATH. SHE BENT HER LONG SCALY NECK AND RELEASED A STREAM OF FIRE THAT NARROWLY MISSED THE DRAGON SLAYER'S SHOULDER. AT THAT MOMENT, ALFRED REACTED NIMBLY AND TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION OF THE DRAGON'S BODY ABOVE HIM. FROM BELOW, HE COULD BRILLIANTLY DRIVE THE

NEEDLE UNDER THE DRAGON'S SCALES AND THEN STAB INTO ITS FLESH. ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS SWING OUT WITH ONE HAND HOLDING ONTO THE ROOT. KORD THUS STABBED HIMSELF INTO THE DRAGON'S OVERGROWN TORSO.
THE LATTER SCREAMED AND PULLED ALFRED BACK A FEW STEPS BACK ONTO THE SOLID GROUND OF THE CLIFF. ALFRED WAS ALREADY HOLDING ANOTHER OF HIS LIGHT SWORDS IN HIS RIGHT HAND, WHICH HE STABBED THROUGH THE THICK NECK OF THE FIERY HEAD. SHE STRAIGHTENED UP TO THE SKY IN MORTAL PAIN AND A GEYSER OF BLOOD AND FIRE SHOT OUT OF HER MOUTH. SHE THEN SANK TO THE GROUND TO WHERE THE TIP OF THE THIN SWORD WAS STICKING OUT. ALFRED BARED HIS TEETH AND DREW ANOTHER SWORD. IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST THAT NOW THE GIRL HAD HER EYES FIXED ON HIM. SHE FINALLY MANAGED TO DODGE THE HEAD ATTACK BY ROLLING TO THE SIDE AND AT THE SAME TIME DUCKING HER TAIL. NOW SHE JUST LEAPED OUT OF HER CROUCH WITH ALL THE STRENGTH SHE HAD IN HER LEGS AND SPUN AROUND IN THE AIR AND

WITH ALL HER WEIGHT AND AIR RESISTANCE PLUS THE FORCE OF GRAVITY SHE LANDED THE BLADE OF HER KATANA BETWEEN THE SCALES OF THE WEAKEST PART OF THE FEAR AND CUT IT. ONLY NOW, WITH BLOOD AND POISON SPRAYING FROM THE DRAGON AND THE LAST HEAD SCREAMING ITS PAIN INTO THE AIR, WERE THE TWO DRAGON SLAYERS ABLE TO APPROACH EACH OTHER AGAIN. THE LAST HEAD RELEASED A SPRAY OF ITS POISONOUS LIQUID AROUND IT. IT LANDED ON THE LEATHER PART OF ALFRED'S ARM ARMOR. HE SAW THE ACID ETCH THE SKIN AND FIZZ. HE NODDED HIS HEAD AT THE GIRL'S INSTRUCTION. SHE JUMPED UP HIGH AND WITH ONE SLASH CUT OFF THE REMAINING HEAD OF THE DRAGON, WHICH FLEW SOMEWHERE TOWARDS ALFRED, AND HE IMPALED IT THROUGH THE EYE AND MOUTH ON HIS CORD WITH ONE JUMP AND LUNGE. -„SO THIS. . . ," THE GIRL SAID AS THE REST OF THE NECK HIT THE GROUND AND THE DRAGON'S SHORT LEGS TWITCHED. THE GIRL CALMLY WALKED AROUND THE DRAGON CORPSE TO THE FIRE AND ALFRED. HE ROASTED THE DRAGON'S

HEAD IMPALED ON HIS CORD OVER THE FLAMES. "I HOPE YOU DON'T EAT IT," SHE SAID. -„NO, I WON'T," HE REPLIED, LOOKING AT THE HEAD AS IT CRUMBLED. IT OOZED BLOOD AND POISON THAT FIZZED AND FOAMED. -„WOW," DARAGONGARA SAID. ALFRED TOOK THE WHOLE SWORD IN BOTH HANDS AND SWUNG IT UNTIL THE HEAD FLEW OFF THE BLADE. FAR AS FAR AS THE REFUGE BUILDING. "THEY WILL BE HAPPY," HE REMARKED. THE GIRL LAUGHED AT THAT. HE THEN WALKED UP TO HER AND HUGGED HER. DARAGONGARA SMILED AT HIM BUT THEN STEPPED BACK. -„THE DRAGON STINKS HERE," SHE REMARKED. -„AND YES. WELL, SHALL WE GO BACK?" -„SHALL WE GO INVESTIGATE HIS SERVANTS? MAYBE THERE WILL BE A TREASURE. WHERE THERE'S A DRAGON, THERE'S ALWAYS TREASURE," SHE SUGGESTED. "HEY, YEAH," HE AGREED. HE PULLED A TORCH FROM HIS RUCKSACK ON HIS BACK AND LIT IT ON THE KINDLED FIRE. HE THEN SET OFF WITH THE GIRL BY HIS SIDE INTO THE CAVE. ITS RELIEF WALLS WERE FULL OF ORNAMENTS AND FIGURES. SOME OF THEM WERE FAMILIAR TO

THEM. THE ENTIRE CAVE LOOKED LIKE ONE BIG DRAGON HATCHERY, BUT IT WAS COMPLETELY EMPTY AND MUSTY. THE PAIR SULLENLY WALKED OUT OF THE LAIR AND SLOWLY MADE THEIR WAY BACK DOWN THE ROCK TOPS DOWN TO THE REFUGE BUILDING. THEIR LEGS WERE ALREADY SPINNING ON THE WAY DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAINS. THEY TRIPPED OVER EACH OTHER AND IT WAS A WONDER THEY DIDN'T SOMERSAULT DOWN INTO THE VALLEY OF THE BUILDING. EVENTUALLY, HOWEVER, THEY REACHED THE BOTTOM OF THE VALLEY EXHAUSTED. THEY HAD NO IDEA IF IT WAS A HALLUCINATION OR A DREAM, BUT A LION RAN TOWARDS THEM. ALFRED AGAIN IMPALED THE DISCARDED DRAGON'S HEAD ON HIS CORD AND TOGETHER THEY CARRIED IT AS A SYMBOL OF VICTORY TO THE BUILDING WHERE ST. GEORGE AND SOME DRAGON SLAYER WITH A NECKLACE OF DRAGON'S TEETH THAT HE HAD NOT SEEN BEFORE STOOD. THE LION IMMEDIATELY LICKED AT HIM. -„THIS IS BRUNCLíK, THE CZECH DRAGON SLAYER. HE HAS COME HERE TO WELCOME YOU AS VICTORS AND PROUD DRAGON

SLAYERS. I HOPE YOU FOUND IN THE LAIR THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT TODAY'S DRAGON HUNT HAD TO GIVE YOU." -„WE DIDN'T FIND ANYTHING THERE. WAS THERE A HIDDEN TREASURE?" -„I TOLD YOU!" -„CALM DOWN KIDS. THE MOST VALUABLE THING YOU COULD FIND IN THAT SITUATION WAS YOURSELF. THAT IS, EACH OTHER."

Čuňas Unejsa couldn't believe his eyes, after entering the portal, his body dragged through the darkness, the media infinity of the unit of time, which actually doesn't even exist in the place he was heading to. First he was in pre-hell. Something like an entrance hall, or the welcome hall of hell. He stood on piles of charred bodies that were still alive. They were devils with fiery hairs, long, that burned. They reached out for him with sharp claws as pointed as their teeth, which they prized from their mouths that were the color of fresh flesh from ear to ear. And yet some magical power has not allowed them to do anything yet. Around Čuňas appeared people whom he knew from his life. They wallowed in their own juices, wailing as the flames battered them. Sulfur was everywhere. After that they noticed him and started calling him with that endless echo around. Those closest to him shook hands and addressed him, and suddenly one of the hands that welcomed him remained in his hand. The infernal creature scaly and greenish like the face of the devil in the Gigas Codex cut it from him. To the poor sinner. Winged demons were flying everywhere above him, clutching bottomless lava vessels in their claws, which they poured over the sinners below them in the

level of Chuňas umejší. Then he finally descended lower. This depth of hell belonged to the so-called untouchables. To those who spent their whole lives just waiting idly for something to fall into their hands or lap. Their comfortable and lazy behavior was also manifested here in hell. They stood listless and phlegmatic within the sea of lava, only the silence and bubbling of the lava and their anguished looks and facial expressions betraying their inner feelings of pain. Finally, he also sank into the hot lava and sank deeper and deeper. It was one of the infernal rivers called Acheron, which represented the border of hell. It then emerged from it feet first and continued to descend, all the way to his head. He found himself in the first of the nine levels of hell. In Limbus. Here stood the unbaptized children in the semi-darkness. With deadened expressions and sunken eyes with pressed lids, he passed peacefully deeper into the next level of hell. For the so-called sensual. There stood all those who wanted to arouse the sense of eroticism in their lives. Deviants, pedophiles. Arousing a sense of the need for pleasure. The lust for such beautiful bodies, which stood here pressed against each other, could be felt in the air here, mixed with sulphur. Women in the most beautiful years of their lives. Likewise the men, all had lust in their open eyes instead of life.

Čuňas umejsa continued to sink into the pitch-black depths of hell. He floated for a while in the total darkness of soot, the stench of sulfur, and smoke, until he floated feet first in a circle of hell for the gluttons. Again there were endless crowds of fat people, all in their fattest years. Čuňas umejs had never

seen such a lard. They were naked and repulsive. He kept falling. This time he was in the circle of hell for the greedy and the spendthrift. There were people of all sizes and proportions, of all races and ethnicities, of all genders. The only thing they had in common was their exaggerated attitude towards money. Once he even recognized the face of an acquaintance who threw away all his money for everything he could at that moment, but on the fourth day he had nothing at all. Čuňas immediately recognized that the spendthrift and reveler was standing on the right. On the left, on the other hand, you are stingy. They stood there in their greatest poverty, paradoxically many of them were very expensively dressed, yet their pockets were turned out. There, their clothes were torn to shreds. The misers, on the other hand, stood in ragged and dirty poor clothes, and around their necks hung large bags of gold, silver and copper coins, even banknotes. Their necks were breaking down under the weight. He moved deeper and deeper. This time to the circle of hell for the short-tempered and grumpy. He had to cover his ears. From one side came the screams of men and women who in their lifetime were choleric, hot-blooded, hot-tempered. And in their most violent form, when they attacked someone like this during their lifetime. On the other side, he was grinned at by grumpy people who had never been happy in their lives, not even from beautiful things. They did sneers and various squeals and snarls. They were the so-called unbridled - not controlled, not tied to anyone else, not tamed by anyone or anything. They were exactly the ones who put their lives on themselves and drove everyone away from their bodies or ran away

FROM THEM. ANOTHER RIVER STRETCHED OUT BELOW THEM, THIS TIME THE STYX. THE FERRYMAN CHARON HIMSELF WAS WAITING FOR HIM ON HIS SHIP, WHICH WILL TRANSPORT HIM TO THE NEXT CIRCLE OF HELL. HE PAID HIM WITH TWO COINS THAT SUDDENLY APPEARED IN HIS HAND. SO CHARON TOOK HIM TO THE SIDE OF THE RIVER THAT BELONGED TO THE HERETICS. THEY ALL SHOUTED IN UNISON THERE THAT THERE IS NO GOD, NOT EVEN HELL, THAT THERE REALLY IS NOTHING.

THAT THEY DON'T BELIEVE IN THIS AND THAT. BULGARIANS AND HERETICS. HE WALKED THROUGH THEM, RECOGNIZING SOME OF THEM. UNTIL HE CAME TO ANOTHER RIVER, THE FLEMEGETON. ALSO CALLED PYRIFLEGETHON BECAUSE IT WAS FULL OF LAVA. WHETHER HE WANTED TO OR NOT, HE HAD TO GO THROUGH IT. SHE TOOK HIM TO THE SEVENTH CIRCLE OF HELL. THIS TIME FOR THE VIOLENT. IT WAS DIVIDED INTO THREE FLOORS. FIRST, FOR TYRANTS AND MURDERERS, THOSE WHO HURT SOMEONE CLOSE TO THEM. THEY ALL HAD IT WRITTEN ON THEIR FACES. THEY WERE ALL SHOWN THERE AT THE MOMENT OF THEIR MURDER. THEY WERE DROWNING IN THE FIRE. THEN CAME ANOTHER FOR SUICIDES AND SPENDTHRIFTS. THOSE WHO TOOK THEIR LIVES AND THOSE WHO DID NOT VALUE THEIR PROPERTY. SUICIDES WERE DEPICTED THERE WITH THE WOUNDS OF THEIR SUICIDE. THE SPENDTHRIFTS, IN TURN, ARE DEVASTATED BY THE LOSS OF POSSESSIONS THEY DID NOT VALUE. THE THIRD WAS FOR RAPISTS OF GOD, BLASPHEMERS, SODOMITES, USURERS. THEN HE SUNK IN EVEN DEEPER. TO THE NEXT CIRCLE OF HELL. FOR FAKE. IT WAS GUARDED BY THE THREE-BODIED GIANT GERYON, WHO WAS SO HIDEOUS THAT Čunas WAS AFRAID OF HIM. BUT WHEN HE FOUND OUT THAT HE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING VERY EFFICIENTLY BECAUSE OF HIS BODY, HE CALMED DOWN. THAT WAS HIS DELUSION. THREE HEADS, THREE BODIES BUTTS FUSED TOGETHER. SIX LEGS, BUT NOT ONE OF THEM

COULD LISTEN TO THE OTHER OR THE THIRD, WITHOUT AGREEMENT. THIS LEVEL OF HELL WAS FOR DECEIVERS AND SEDUCERS. SOME TOOK AS MUCH MONEY AS THEY COULD FROM WHOEVER THEY COULD FOR LIES, AND OTHERS SEDUCED WOMEN WITH LIES AND OTHER ENTICEMENTS. THEN CAME THE FLATTERERS. ONE OF THE FEW WHO COULD ALWAYS PRAISE SOMEONE ONE DAY AND SOMEONE ELSE THE NEXT. SAINTS. THEY WERE IN THE GUTTER TOO. THEY BOUGHT THEIR HOLINESS WITH THE INDULGENCES OF THE CHURCH. NEXT, THERE WAS A PIT OF DIVINERS, ASTROLOGERS AND MAGICIANS. THEN PAID. THEN THE HYPOCRITES. THIEVES, CUNNING ADVISERS, SOWERS OF SCHISM, I.E. SLANDERERS AND SCHEMERS. HELL HAD A PLACE FOR EVERYONE, THEN CAME THE LAST FOUR-WAY OF COUNTERFEITERS - METAL, PEOPLE, COINS, WORDS. THE NINTH CIRCLE OF HELL WAS DEDICATED TO THE FAITHLESS, I.E. TRAITORS. HERE WAS THE CHIEF OF THE TRAITORS RELATED TO THE KAM RULER CAIN. THEN A RIVER OF HOWLS. BEHIND HER IS KERBEROS, THE THREE-HEADED DOG AND HADES, LUCIFER, SATHAN, THE DEVIL. -„MAN, YOU GOT AS FAR AS ME, THE RULER OF HELL HIMSELF. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE -„I ENTERED THE PORTAL NEAR THE UNDERGROUND. -„AH, THAT PORTAL." SATHAN PONDERED. -„I SHOULD DO SOMETHING WITH HIM. WELL, GOOD. MAN, THE RIVER LETHE HERE. THE RIVER FORGETS. DRINK UP AND YOU'LL FORGET YOU WERE EVER HERE. YOU WAKE UP AT HOME IN BED. BUT I REALIZE ONE THING. WE WILL MEET AGAIN WHEN YOU ARE TRULY DEAD. YOU WILL END UP IN A MONEY PIT. I'LL HAVE HER PREPARED FOR YOU," SATHAN LAUGHED OUT LOUD. Čuňas DIDN'T KNOW IF HE WAS JOKING OR NOT. SO HE WENT TO DRINK FROM THE RIVER INSTEAD. HEAVEN HAS ALWAYS HONORED POVERTY AND TEMPERANCE, YOU CAN STILL SAVE YOURSELF! THOSE WERE THE LAST WORDS ČUNAS HEARD BEFORE HE DRANK AND FORGOT FOREVER. -„THE PORTAL WORKS BY TAKING

YOU WHERE YOU WANT IT TO TAKE YOU, WHERE YOU BELIEVE IT WILL TAKE YOU. "

AWAKENING THE DEAD

Cousins Sebastian and Rembrandt stood on the terrace of their family estate, watching the clouds float across the sky above the highest local mountain, Sternstein, and overtake the waxing moon in its spectacular final phase. Sebastian knew that this did not bode well. The nearer the waxing moon was to its full moon, the more it attracted danger, but this night and this hour were astrologically predestined for their act, which struck the clock exactly at the moment when both hands paused in the same direct position of twelve o'clock between Saturday and Sunday. —,, Today it will be exactly five years since our great—uncle is no longer here," remarked one of them. —,,And that's why we met here. Although only in two, but despite that," he pulled out a twisted parchment from under his clothes. —,,Today is the date we found in his diary. It was highlighted but not written. It was only stated that it should be used at this time in this place," one of them tapped his staff on the ground where a strange symbol was hinted at carved into the stone. There were more around here. Together they formed a protective circle illuminated by candles at the main points

of the five-pointed star shape. The other of them ignited his beam and shined it above both of their heads. The scroll rustled and was thrown into counter gusts of wind as it was opened. The one holding it began to read it. The strange muttering gave goosebumps, but he knew what he was doing. On the other hand, the other young man was in tense anticipation. They both suspected what was going on. Their great-uncle was involved in the odd all his life until his rather mysterious demise. In his will, he listed his two great-grandsons as honorary heirs to the family estate. Of course, it had its dark side. The sprawling estate was secluded, on the fringes of society. Even the locals from the nearby village of Owen considered their great uncle a freak. However, what the two cousins found in their great-uncle's diaries led them to the fact that he was a man who had not set foot in a church since he could make up his own mind. So that he gained independence. He sacrificed his life to travel around the world, to dangerous regions and study secret sciences. That is why they were more than surprised when they discovered his secret of unholy necromancy and his experiments with it. That is why he also left them this scroll and other documents, for the necessity of the success of this ritual. His life's achievement in this discipline was approaching. However, he did not live to see it, because such an opportunity only occurs once every few decades, even hundreds of years. Saturn conjunction with the moon. However, neither of them had any idea what the consequences would be in reality. So they were both, as they say, skeptical. And so, out of pure curiosity, they decided on this attempt, and for some a shameful act. The one whose voice read the forbidden words had everything prepared down to the last detail, according to his great-uncle's studies. He waved a neo-romantic raven wing with his right hand. He let the wind that urged him so guide him. After reading the last syllables, he dipped it into the prepared milk in the bowl in front of him, and that's when he reached for the neo-romantic bell forged from electra magica and rang it. At that moment, reality was distorted and the surrounding

world opened its astral gates to the realm of the dead, who had their souls and their containers near the estate.

It was the realm of their great—uncle Arthur and all who had accompanied him in earthly life. Two men stood in the moonlight walking in the garden. They watched the figure move slowly and clumsily across the lawn. It was just a shabby ragged robe floating a few centimeters above the ground. Sebastian moved closer and threw the white dust of the gun into the area under the hood to reveal the plastic form of the face. A woman they knew appeared to both of them. —,,For God's sake, Sebastian, after all, this is mistress Gréta, our great—uncle's servant." —,,Not for God, for the holy spirit, he revived her." —,,It seems to me that it is Satan himself." —,,That would mean that even white magic can be used in its darkest form." —,,But this is already a special branch of magic, called necromancy. Evocation of the undead." —,,Look, here I made the individual signs of the protection circle," Sebastian said and with his staff he uncovered part of the ground vegetation, mostly grasses and some flowers, to reveal what was hidden on the surface. Just then, from the shadow under a hundred—year—old beech tree, around which the sloppy cabbage was growing, the ghost of Greta was approaching. Her gnawed, cum—spattered fingers poked out from under her death robes. She held them out to her cousins as if she really remembered them from before her death. However, the face was misshapen. Acting after decomposition, by the way the smoke fell from it. She surveyed them with her soulless gaze. A trickle of dust, acting like saliva, dripped from her mouth. The smell of decaying flesh wafted up to them, and at that moment the sound of perhaps the cruelest beast whistled through the surroundings. —,,Oh my God, does that magic work on animals too?' Rembrandt looked around. —,,I am afraid so. The ancient Tibetans called this opening the mouth, and the dead person was supposed to answer their

questions. animals were rather used in wars. he doesn't care that you're in a protective field. he will jump at you even though he knows it will mortally damage him. babylonian necromancers called themselves "sakhurats", they believed that a person who is born has a protective spirit inside him, which after his death turns into the demon "utukku". this is not the case with animals. they only act according to their instinct. back then, only the spirit or breath of the bones was evoked, but this is the mastery of the material form of the dead and his spirit. however, this spell only works up to a certain degree of decomposition of the body, but it depends on the necromancer's magical power. that is why, in history, these rituals were not allowed to be done in cemeteries and mass graves, because what happened to us now would be in danger. only such a great uncle, inside a separate crypt, could help us." —,,we have to go. look sebastian, there are some strange figures over there in the woods," he alerted his cousin with a gesture of his chin towards the woods. sebastian looked back there. indeed, grotesque figures stood there, rather shadows with glowing eyes. —,,a decade ago, uncle artur brought a cat—like beast of prey here from his expedition to africa. he bragged about her at hunting parties and amused himself by tossing her live game. despite the fact that he treated her better than his ex—wife, in the end she unfortunately sent and he let her carve the great tombstone in our strange cemetery under which she was buried until this accursed hour. she must have climbed out and will try to tear us apart, we have to go." rembrandt looked up to his older cousin, knowing very well what he had been through in the last few days as the now acting necromancer. evocation demanded energy from its victims, which had to be gathered first. for eight days, do not make love to women or drink alcohol. they were not allowed to socialize much with each other, let alone with strangers, preferably alone. every day, both of them thought about the people who died here, and thanks to that, they managed to observe the last

POINT – FASTING. THERE WAS NOT MUCH APPETITE FOR FOOD. OF COURSE-FIGHTING WITH MYSELF INSIDE. THE DARK SIDE OF EVERY PERSON, WHICH CAUSES THE INNERMOST CONCERNS AND FEARS IN HIM. AND THIS FIGHT SHOULD THEN BE REFLECTED IN THE EVOCATION OF THE DECEASED, WHETHER THEY WILL BE CALLED INTO GOOD OR BAD ENERGY. IT IS A CHALLENGING DISCIPLINE FOR BEGINNERS. NOW THEIR LEGS WERE ALREADY ON THE SHOULDERS, JUST BEFORE THOSE LIFELESS FINGERS OF THE SERVANT GRETA, WHO HAD ALREADY CLUNG TO BOTH COUSINS SO MUCH DURING HER LIFE, COULD TOUCH THEM. A FEW METERS BEHIND THEM, SOMETHING INHUMAN JUMPED WITH A THUD ON THE GRASSY GROUND. HOWEVER, THE TWO BROTHERS ALREADY FOUND THEMSELVES BEHIND THE CREAKING DOOR OF THEIR GREAT–UNCLE ARTHUR'S FINAL RESTING PLACE. THE CRYPT WAS DAMP, UREA DRIPPING DOWN THE WALLS. ONE OF THEM APPROACHED THE GREAT UNCLE'S TOMB AND BEGAN HIS PRAYER. BUT NOTHING HAPPENED. "I HAVE TO USE-BLOOD," SEBASTIAN SAID. –,,WE ARE CONNECTED WITH OUR GREAT–UNCLE BY OUR BLOODLINE," HE EXPLAINED, AND WITH MAXIMUM CONCENTRATION ON THE PERSONALITY OF THE DECEASED, HE RECITED THE TEXT FROM SCRIPT.

AFTER A WHILE, THE SHADOW OF THE UNCLE'S FACE APPEARED ABOVE THE TOMB, ON THE WALL IN THE LIGHT OF THE BURNING CANDLE, AND A MUFFLED, THROATY GREETING WAS HEARD FROM THE TOMB. THIS WAS NO LONGER NECROMANCY, WHAT THE COUSINS SAW IN THE TRADITIONALITY OF TONIGHT. –,,SKYOMANCY," WHISPERED REMBRANDT AND HE AND SEBASTIAN STARED AT EACH OTHER. IN SEBASTIAN'S LOOK, HE RECOGNIZED THE UNDISGUISED SURPRISE THAT EVEN HIS YOUNGER COUSIN HAD READ SOMETHING IN HIS GREAT–UNCLE'S NOTES. THE SHADOW LINGERED IN ANTICIPATION. NOW WAS A GOOD TIME TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE. –,,UNCLE ARTHUR, HOW DO WE STOP THE RAMPAGE OF THE BEAST YOU BROUGHT FROM ABROAD?" –,,DELUSION!" THE NAME OF THE CREATURE, AS HIS GREAT–UNCLE HAD MISCHIEVOUSLY NAMED, RUMBLED FROM THE GRAVE. –,,HE'S LOOKING FOR ME!" THE EERIE DEEP VOICE THROUGH THE CRYPT CONTINUED. –,,HE WANTS TO TEAR ME APART FOR WHAT I DID TO HIM DURING HIS LIFE. HE TOOK HIM FROM THE DANGEROUS WILDERNESS AND TRAINED HIM HERE INTO A

BLOODTHIRSTY BEAST THAT TORE AT MY COMMAND THE BODIES OF BOTH BEASTS AND PEOPLE." BOTH COUSINS MANAGED TO REMEMBER THEIR CHILDHOOD YEARS, WHEN THE TORN BODIES OF POACHERS AND TREE THIEVES FROM THE MANOR'S FOREST WERE FOUND AROUND HERE AT CHRISTMAS. —,,THIS IS IT! WE'LL LET THE MONSTER IN, LURE HIM TO THE GREAT UNCLE'S SOUL IF THEY WANT TO REST TOGETHER," SUGGESTED REMBRANDT. SEBASTIAN NODDED SILENTLY. —,,FOOLS!" GREAT UNCLE ARTHUR SHOUTED. —,,DON'T LET THAT CURSED SPIRIT IN HERE, BUT YOU ARE THE SHADOWS THAT HAVE CROSSED THE THRESHOLD OF THE PROTECTIVE CIRCLE," CONTINUED THE SPIRIT OF THE GREAT—UNCLE IN A MALEVOLENT TONE, AND THE CONTOURS OF HIS FACE ON THE WALL BEHIND THE CANDLE RIPPLED IN THE MOVEMENTS OF THE FLAME, WHICH WAS STILL HIT BY A FLYING DRAFT. —,,YOU'RE WRONG, GREAT—UNCLE, SEBASTIAN AND I PROVIDED A PROTECTIVE RING AROUND THE ESTATE," REMBRANDT TURNED TO HIM AT THE LAST MOMENT, BEFORE GOING UP THE FIRST SPIRAL STAIRCASE FROM THE CRYPT TO THE MASSIVE STEEL DOOR. SEBASTIAN, WHO WAS WALKING IN FRONT OF HIM, REMEMBERED HOW IN HIS OLD AGE HIS GREAT—UNCLE HAD SUFFERED FROM LONELINESS SO MUCH THAT HE HAD BECOME SUCH A BADASS THAT HE WAS FINALLY LEFT ALONE, WITH ONLY HIS ESTATE AND GHOSTS. AND OF COURSE THE MADNESS THAT HAUNTED HIM EVEN NOW IN HIS POSTHUMOUS APPEARANCE. THE VOICE OF THE LATIN WORDS WAVERED UP AND DOWN IN CHROMATIC KEYS. "HE'S ALREADY AT THE DOOR," SAID SEBASTIAN, WHO WAS THE FIRST TO GO.

—,,WE'LL LET HIM IN BEFORE THAT GREAT—UNCLE CURSES US," REMBRANDT SUPPORTED HIS COUSIN'S PROPOSAL. SEBASTIAN FIRMLY PRESSED THE STEEL HANDLE OF THE HEAVY DOOR AND SLOWLY OPENED IT WIDE WITH A LOUD CREAK. A WIND AS FIERCE AS THE BREAK—SPEED GALE ITSELF RUSHED IN. IT KNOCKED REBRANT BACK AGAINST THE WALL. THE ONLY LUCK. SEBASTIAN WAS ABOUT TO JUMP TO HELP FROM BEHIND THE DOOR. BLUD FLEW THROUGH THE ENTIRE CRYPT DOWN TO HIS MASTER'S GRAVE. HE SLAMMED WITH ALL HIS MIGHT INTO THE WALL, ON WHICH GREAT UNCLE ARTHUR'S SHADOW WAS STILL PROJECTED. NOT ONLY DID HE BLOW OUT THE CANDLE, HE EVEN BROKE IT. AT THE SAME MOMENT, THE DECEASED'S SILHOUETTE ALSO

disappeared, and in its place a memorial crack grew on the wall. Only death accompanied by silence and darkness could be weighed here. The cousins closed the crypt from the outside and made their way inside the mansion. —,,We still have a little time before the magic hour passes," said Sebastian, looking at the clock ticking away forever. He took hold of the candle on the tray and brought it close to the portrait of the great—aunt, which on that wall inspired the widower's malice. —,,Here Terezia, a pearl necklace, a gold ring and your favorite dress," Sebastian uttered into nothingness in front of that memorial part of the room, as if it represented some kind of fetish of the deceased. Around were built libraries with books in which she loved to read. Sebastian lit aloe vera incense mixed with pegala hermana. "This is called evocation of love," he said from under his black box. Rembrandt just watched. The picture on the wall seemed to fix its gaze on him, and at that moment something happened. The clock on the opposite wall seemed to jump ahead several minutes and stopped exactly at the position of four o'clock in the morning. They began to be and the whole estate seemed to be speechless. They remained in the same position in the morning, when the cousins, already packed again, resorted to leaving the family estate in the woods below the mountains of the nearby village of Owen.

REVELATION OF KIRWLWYUN JALU

It was hard for me to sleep, I tossed and turned all night, but I couldn't wake up from that nightmare, as if something was holding me there. I felt how much power over the universe, over all star constellations, had been gained by an as yet unknown and unnamed entity. I saw her. I have no idea if it was meant to be my hidden uniqueness or if she chose me on purpose so that I could carry her message. It hovered above the milky nebula in its full span. She gave a mutated impression. A thousand eyes shining, as if she could see into my very bones. She then snorted and steam emerged

FROM HER NOSTRILS, COVERING THE ENTIRE NEBULA EVEN MORE. AT THAT SHE OPENED HER MOUTH LIKE THAT ELONGATED CROCODILE. SHE DISPLAYED HER DOUBLE-FANGED SMILE LIKE A MAN-EATING SHARK. THE MEMBRANE BETWEEN HER JAWS TENSED AGAIN LIKE THE WINGS OF THOSE BATS WHEN TAKING OFF OR GLIDING. THE TONGUE HAD THE FORM OF A DOZEN SMALL TENTACLES IN ONE TUFT. THEY WEREN'T THE ONLY ONES THAT SQUIRMED, SO DID HIS LIMBS, WHICH, LIKE HIS ENTIRE BODY, WERE COVERED IN A THICK LAYER OF SCALES. ITS BACK WAS ADORNED WITH A DOMINANT AND MONUMENTAL FIN, ABOVE WHICH HOVERED THE TIP OF ITS TAIL WITH A POISONOUS TIP. AND AT THAT MOMENT SHE BIT ME WITH HER NIMBLE MOVEMENT AND FILLED MY BODY WITH VIOLENT VENOM. PAIN SHOT THROUGH ME AND IT TURNED INTO SPASMS IN MY LIMBS. I FELT PARALYZED, BUT I FINALLY OPENED MY EYES. WAS IT JUST A NIGHT TERROR? A SHORT EXTREMELY TERRIFYING DREAM ASSOCIATED WITH PANIC, SCREAMING AND RESTLESSNESS. I STUDIED MY PALM WITHOUT A SINGLE FURTHER MOVEMENT. THE FINGERS, ACROSS THE PALM TO THE ARM AND THE WHOLE BODY GUIDED THE STRANDS AT A SLOW PACE CHANGING MY DNA.

THE COLOR WAS HARD TO DESCRIBE, DARK. THE CLOSEST SHE HAD TO A DARK DEEP PURPLE. IT CHANGED ACCORDING TO THE TENSION IN THE CONTRACTION OF THE SKIN LIKE A BRUISE. THEREFORE, IT ALSO HAD SHADES OF GREEN, BLUE, YELLOW AND ORANGE. AFTER A SHORT WHILE, I MANAGED TO STRAIGHTEN UP IN A TURKISH SITTING POSITION, SO THAT HE COULD SEE THAT THE SAME DARK VEINS WERE ALSO SPREAD OVER MY FEET. BETWEEN MY FINGERS, THE SKIN THERE WAS SLOWLY PEELING OFF. THE NATURAL PROCESS OF EVERY ANIMAL, ITS EXTERNAL CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT.

AS DOGS SHED THEIR FUR IN THE SPRING, AS CRUSTACEANS SHED THEIR SHELLS, AS SNAKES SHED THEIR SKIN. SO MY SKIN GRADUALLY PEELED OFF ON PARTS OF MY BODY. EVEN AT THAT MOMENT I REALIZED THAT THOSE TINY PARTICLES OF SKIN WERE BEING REPLACED BY A ROUGHER THICKER SKIN SIMILAR TO MINIATURE HEXAGONS. MORE SPECIFICALLY, SCALES. HAD THE ENTITY REALLY ATTACKED ME WITH SOME OF ITS METAMORPHIC POISON? I TOUCHED THE TOP OF MY HEAD TO MY HAIR TO MAKE SURE IT REALLY WAS. IN THE AREA CALLED THE SYMPATHETIC, I HAD A ROUND PIN, SWOLLEN AFTER THE INJECTION.

YES, IT WAS TRUE. INDEED, WHAT I DREAMED IN MY DREAM WAS A REALITY. MY JAW ACHED, AS IF MY WISDOM TEETH WERE REGROWING AT A RAPID PACE. BUT I HAD THOSE TORN OUT FOR MANY YEARS. I STOOD IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR AND SAW HOW THE SKIN ON MY LOWER JAW TIGHTENS IN THE HINGE AREA AND THE BONE STRETCHES ITSELF INTO THE UNDERBITE. I PITIFULLY GRABBED THE SORE SPOTS AND TRIED TO STOP THE PROCESS. IT DIDN'T WORK, DESPITE MY EFFORTS, MY LOWER JAW STRETCHED INTO A STRANGE GROTESQUE UNDERBITE. IT WAS NO LONGER HELD BY THE HINGE. SHE WRIGGLED OUT OF IT AND THE AREA WAS FLOODED WITH THE STRANGE COLOR AGAIN. I WENT TO THE KITCHEN TO GET ICE AND PUT IT ON THE SORE SPOTS. AT THAT MOMENT, THE CLARITY OF MY MIND CAME OVER ME. I RECOGNIZED WHAT WAS FLOWING THROUGH MY BODY. IT WAS THE EIGHTH COLOR FROM SPACE — OCTARINE. AND EVEN AT THAT MOMENT, AN INCREDIBLE PAIN CAUGHT ME IN MY WEAK PARTS. I RAN TO THE BATHROOM TO RELIEVE MYSELF, BUT WHAT I SAW SHOOK ME. A SPIKE SIMILAR TO THE ONE THAT PIERCED ME GREW OUT OF MY LIMB, AND THE COLOR OOZED AND DRIPPED FROM IT. THAT POISON. I HEARD ECHOES OF SOME WORDS AROUND ME.

−,,KROLOKION GALO, KIRWLWKYUN JALU." WHAT DID THOSE WORDS MEAN? WAS THAT THE NAME OF THE ONE I SAW IN MY DREAM? HE ACCEPTED THIS AS A SUFFICIENT ANSWER FOR HIS BEWILDERED MIND. THEN SOMEONE RANG AND I PICKED UP THE RECEIVER. −,,WHO'S THERE?" THE NOISE INDICATED THAT NO ONE, BUT DESPITE THAT SOMEONE ANSWERED IN AN INHUMAN VOICE:−,,CTHULHU FIT AGN. CTHULHU AWAITS."

Only the light cone of my flashlight moved along the walls. They were cracked and falling apart, the nitrogen-containing dust used to make the dry adobe bricks used for the interior masonry of these ancient structures. Only the remains of hieroglyphs and images gave them their appreciation. What they made of them, what they were. Nitro unknown pyramids found under a layer of fine desert sand in the center of the Amarna Valley Basin which was located further from the Veset Necropolis across the Valley of the Kings and Queens, made of white sandstone. For the first time this giant burial ground of 47 pyramids was discovered by Diodorus, during the 180th Olympic Games, i.e. 57 BC. Not many have survived since these times. But even so... It could be the crypt of Queen Nefertiti, the beauty who comes, Lady of Both Lands as the Amarna Archive wrote about her, roughly 400 clay tablets. Rumors of her beauty spread as far as the Hittite Empire itself, which sent her suitors. But none of them succeeded. Not because the queen would reject him but because he was always murdered before he could even reach his queen. As if she was already cursed during her life as well as after her death. The only one who succeeded, at least for a short period of his life, was the vizier Amenhotep III, " Bearer of the Burden " and a mighty ruler who conquered the whole world even before his birth. He was promised by his ancestors to rule the Upper and Lower Nile Sudan to the borders of Somalia. He regularly received gifts from all the

trading capitals and important points on the map such as Cyprus, Crete, Syria, Palestine and other Greek islands and cities in the Mediterranean region. His magnificent crown in two parts on either side of the Nile on the top of his head and the glittering diadem on his forehead called the atef, the headdress of the god Ra, as a symbol of the rulerships of the territory reaching to the ends of the heavens. This monarch could be proud of the fact that she was the first in marriage with Queen Nefertiti, the first lady of his harem, his high priestess, whose tomb has not yet been officially discovered. Only the Berlin Museum of Egypt could boast of exhibiting an ebony head depicting the immortal beauty of this queen. Her grave must be discovered someday, so why not now.

Something always seemed to him at the pyramids. That shape. As if only a handful of the chosen ones, or chosen gods, could always fit up there. And those below always multiplied and multiplied and led down. The entire tomb was so intricate that even its experts would not have known about it. The only thing perhaps even more mysterious than her tomb was the legendary mythical city of Akhetaten, Aten's horizon, which was supposed to be likened to paradise on earth. So why did this adventurous archaeologist think he could find her grave?

Probably because he himself didn't even remotely believe in the possibility that one day he would appear in the middle of what was probably her entrails, through which he could make his way after her death just like the last mortal who dropped it here. None other than the kamir, the official closest to the royal family. The young archeologist devoted his whole life to this mentally immortal queen as if she beckoned him. And now he spent all eternity looking for a way further through the sandstone corridors, as if it were some kind of maze. Except for the fact that this wasn't ordinary. It was deadly. It represented the pinnacle of Egyptian technology in construction. The chambers he had passed through before were always at right angles to each other, which meant that the deeper he went, the more convoluted the passages would be. He had already passed through eight chambers, a long steep staircase, which then led to a corridor and more stairs and the next corridor in which he was now. Really confusing. He preferred not to

think about the way back. The end of the cone of light found the object cursing across the narrow corridor. His breath hitched. He could tell from afar that it wasn't something the ancient Egyptians had left here as a virtue for their queen. It was an object that had been exported here for years, if not decades. Torn unidentifiable textiles with disintegrated white ivory-colored bones sticking out of them. What blocked his path now had once come here in its own way. The reason why they didn't leave will probably remain a mystery. After all, he will not be the first visitor here since the tomb was preserved. A vein on his temple began to throb strongly. This was the case whenever he came into direct contact with danger or something that filled him with dread and unanswerable questions. Adrenaline. He had no choice but to step over the remains. It was close enough. He accidentally tripped over the very thing he was trying to avoid. The toe of his shoe got tangled in a piece of torn rag. He twitched partly in fear and partly in the belief that it would help him get out of the coil of tangled and knotted cords. The whole pile of something shifted and clattered to the ground. He fell on his butt and bruised his tailbone a bit. Only now did he realize that the sandstone is really as hard as it seems at first glance. For a moment he looked at the pile of bones and cloth just lying there. Limbs. He managed to turn onto all fours again and then onto his feet. Even so, he remained in a futile forward bend for the ceiling of the great labyrinth of the crypt was low. He felt a pressure in his chest as he breathed in the scattered dust. His diaphragm tickled. He wanted to cough. Instead, he strode across the hall. Let him be out of that horrible place. He came across a breach in the passage and continued through it, deep into the bowels of the crypt. He could tell that the corridor was beginning to narrow here. One of the sandstone blocks mysteriously moved inside the passage. He had to stretch himself across. He hung the flashlight on his belt loop next to the external flashlight. He crawled through a gap about a meter wide. The corridor was perpendicular. He could feel it on the tips of his boots.

He took his flashlight from his belt again and shined it on her. It led to complete darkness. A long corridor full of cobwebs caught in the dust stretched ahead.

How on earth am I supposed to get through this, he thought, wiping his sweaty forehead with his sleeve. Clumps of dust in the cobwebs floated like clouds before rain. And he didn't like you. And what's worse, he absolutely hated those who saw cobwebs. Spiders. More arachnophobia than claustrophobia, but even so he knew he had to pass. To turn it back now would call into question his entire stint from start to finish. The first days at the department to the complete preparation for Egypt and here in the state museums to follow the stone chronicles. He studied her traces already in Germany. They even stretched through Turkey and the former Babylonia to the Sahara Desert itself. And there even to places where no mere mortal dares. And behold, he really dared to step into these webs. He wondered if those who spun them were still around. Sacred Egyptian Spiders. One with the longest eight legs. Disgusting to think about. And what about their poison. He'll hope the webs aren't too long and run through them as quickly as possible. He wrapped Palestine around his mouth. And with the flashlight raised, he ran across the corridor. Cobwebs stretched before his eyes. Their fibers stuck to his fingers and palms and he dragged them behind him. He could feel it sticking around his entire body as well. On the thighs and shins, around the shoulders, and these layers multiplied and stuck more and more and became heavy and stuck to each other. Difficult to move in them. Until he hit the wall with his hand. He turned to his left and saw another corridor in the spotlight. Fortunately, it was empty and headed downwards, deep into the depths of the pyramid. He was wrapped in cobwebs like maybe a mummy herself, so he tore off the cobwebs. It was difficult because they stuck too much to the body, so even so, a lot of the original ones remained in place. But he had no intention of cleaning himself there. He had to go down to the crypt. He had to see it with his own eyes. It pulled him there like a taut web, like a string on a rod that tenses and resonates, just like his heart in these corridors. With his breath wrapped in Palestine, he staggered through the narrow corridors of the pyramid and slanted down into its bowels. The flashlight in his hand gradually revealed an exit from the corridors into a vast square vestibule and then into a high-ceilinged

rectangular space flanked by two monstrous columns decorated with carved statues of a woman and a man. The archeologist's forehead ended where the woman's legs began which were close together, while the man had one leg stepped forward probably as a sign of activity. The woman was depicted naked and at her venerable height clutching a large phallus, a symbol of fertility, life and resurrection, an attribute of the god of the dead Usir. From this room and further into the depth led a corridor ending in a square room from the right wall of which a short corridor opened into a hall with four equally huge columns supporting the ceiling, until beyond this room a huge sanctuary and a crypt were exposed equipped with one powerful pillar, called a sekech - in height a built rectangle extending to a kind of gaps which in the right confluence of circumstances, let light in from the very tip of the pyramid. This must have represented the cult of Nefertitis own god Mitanni.

Even that was impressive for her. She was the only monotheist. She managed to create a sect worshiping a single god for a decade. Atona the Sun standing in the sky, and its rays now illuminating the signs engraved on the inlaid walls - a work created by folding and gluing various colors and structures into desired shapes, geometric figures, plants or specific motifs, patterns of figures, ornaments, illusory architecture or figurative scenes. All this with real lapis lazuli and decorative gold or many precious stones, such as chrysoprase, ammonite, tourmaline, emerald, labradorite, fluorite, agate, topaz and opal. Somewhere where the cartouche rested - a special oval frame, part of the hieroglyphic inscription of the royal title in ancient Egypt, should lie the resting body of Queen Nefertiti, which was mummified by a group of Egyptian surgeons. As a rule, the process lasted around three months. He saw it vividly, as if it were happening right in front of his eyes. Chosen from among the mortuary priests, embalming her remains. One of them, pre-painted a line with red paint on the left side of the abdomen, where a longitudinal cut was then made with several filing movements and cut through the queen's abdominal wall. However, this act had its flip side to traditional mummification. Whoever desecrated the queen's body in this way had to

be punished by other mummifiers in the form of stoning. He was then replaced by another priest who reached into the open abdominal cavity with a practiced touch and gradually removed all the entrails. Heart, liver, kidneys, lungs and intestines. To penetrate the skull and then for the path to the brain it was necessary to pierce the ceiling of the nasal passage with a chisel. Finally, with a silver hook inserted diagonally upwards through the nostril the third priest pulled out the brain from the cavity of the skull. He washed the entrails and stored them in four prepared stone containers called canopies, so that the organs, according to Egyptian mysticism, bearers of feelings (including thirst and hunger), would remain separately stored inside. This was followed by seventy days of dehydrating the body with salts and stuffing it with herbs, straw, and rolls of resin- and mastic-impregnated cloth. Mainly the nostrils, the cheeks and the muscles of the arms and legs. After these days, the queen's body was washed with palm wine while reciting prayers to the gods, and then treated with frankincense, cedar oil, myrrh and cinnamon. This had a preservative effect, the secret of why the mummy does not change even after a thousand years. After that came the final stage, when the mummifiers approached the body and tightly wrapped the body and limbs of the deceased with cloth bandages, layer by layer of the bandage they individually soaked in a solution of liquid rubber of unknown composition.

Finally, thimbles were put on her hands and feet from the little finger to the thumb, made of noble metal. It was a gold ingot with an electron. According to the preserved data, the Egyptians experimented with this solution for centuries and tried to improve its properties as much as possible. That's why some bodies had their tissues corroded and blackened over the ages in their tombs. He knew all this from the extant papyri he had read. This is how the ach, the chosen one, that is, the ruler, was always spent after death. These vessels, called faience, that is, a kind of pottery of a yellowish or reddish color, which are covered with a white opaque glaze and are considered to be a fine ceramic, resembling porcelain, filled with entrails and decorated with a prominent embossing of the ancient Egyptian

symbol shen resembling an omega were placed here near the depiction of the sons Hora the most powerful of the Egyptian gods Imseta Hapi Duamutefa and Kebehsenuf. The opposite walls were used as storage for tools and other gifts of the people to their queen. This tomb was completely unique. After all it was true Egyptian must. All stories about imaginings of what this grave might look like. He read a little and was able to discern what the hieroglyphs on the walls of the crypt were about. Large anch translated to live a representative of earthly and afterlife i.e. eternal life in the shape of a large latin cross at the bottom with an oval at the top. The habit of describing the walls in hieratic script sketches which are essentially what attracted the archaeologist the most. He translated them and composed their text which only accompanies them. These reliefs carried a message it was obvious at first glance. There was even a majestic Isis the god of fear and terror who impaled snakes with his crooked beak and a sinister crocodile who was not willing to spare the life of man or any other animal. Likewise a little further along the wall were personifications of the sun the god Re. Next to him is the god of the earth Geb and of the air Shav. Unfortunately he soon saw in the distance that the reliefs were not complete. Or was it just excess wall space that no longer needed to be added to? He wasn't sure. Despite that the decoration of the surrounding walls was breathtaking. The protector of the dead Sokar with the head of a falcon and on the opposite wall Anup with jackal features. They were all here. Hathor with a cow's horns and head. Thoth with a long beak. Bear-faced Eset. Magnificent work. Purgatory. Ulhedl of Fire. Shadow Eater. Blood Devourer were all described around all were Usir. The sinner had to prove to them that he was not burdened with any guilt if he failed then the demons attacked him. They too were depicted here as naked creatures with claws and needle-like teeth.

It made sense why all the divinity was engraved in the end. After her death and the disintegration of the All God Sect. they decided on a compromise that her faith should also go to eternal life together. Here too a legend was described about her descendant who was supposed to be a danger to Egypt and therefore

they decided to send him down the Nile to his fate. If he were to put all the relevant clues together by all accounts this descendant should be Moses himself. Despite this misfortune the ruler Nefertiti was a strong personality. her role model was the ruler Hatshepsut who was the only woman in the history of Egypt who ruled both the north and the south without a man by her side. She was also depicted here. As befits a monarch - with a bowed neck. The sovereign because she wore an ornamental flamboyant beard. What the? Some ancient Egyptian symbols. The archaeologist did not understand them. All he knew was that it was used by priests. a highly educated caste There were also some astronomical signs. He suddenly realized that in the center of the room behind the queen's tomb was a strange short lamp with a gem ball. When he shined on her. the cone of light within her shattered to all sides of the room blinding him. He dared to place his palm fingers outstretched on the part of the altar in front of him. and the strange orb changed the flow of light through to the wall. It irradiated one huge figure - the Dendera zodiac. He studied in it for a while. It made sense. Each sign has been described here. Scales - I balance. Virgo - I analyze. Leo - I can. Cancer - I feel. Gemini - I think. Taurus - I have. Aries - I am. Pisces - I believe. Aquarius - I know. Capricorn - I use. Sagittarius - I see. Scorpio - I wish. There was also a description of the process of reincarnation. at least from the Egyptian point of view. The cycle of reincarnations is completed when each soul has lived through all twelve signs in its lifetime and received the energy of their planets. He had the impression that he had come to a life-changing knowledge. Suddenly he heard a rustling somewhere behind him. He turned around in horror and shone his flashlight somewhere where he felt the sound was coming from. There was a medium-sized beetle. Scarabeus - Sacred Willow. An insect popularly known as a dung beetle rolling its ball. He took a breath and wiped his sweaty forehead. But what interested him. where he got married here. Some questions will probably never be answered. At that moment. his flashlight flashed several times and then he was enveloped in impenetrable darkness. According to memory. he had a spare battery attached to his belt. He

removed it from its cover and replaced the battery of his flashlight according to the procedure he had learned. Thank God, a life-giving cone of light reappeared, revealing what or what stood right in front of him. A creature of human appearance. Or at least what's left of the man. She was looking straight into his face with her empty sockets around which a tattered and blackened bandage fluttered. As well as around the open mouth which valued the remaining toothless parts of him. Her forehead was decorated with a crown depicting the winged serpent Uradjeta, a symbol of royalty and government, similar to a cobra, which was supposed to have the power of the flames of the sun itself. Where would anyone scream in horror and dismay at this traumatic moment. However, this archaeologist immediately knew with whom he had the honor. The mummy of Queen Nefertiti herself.

His name was Archibald. One of the few Theurgists to pass through the University of Gray Magic. He still belonged there, he was an adept at being a professor. After the weekend, he was supposed to have his last test - a mental battle with a demon. He had to prepare properly for it and since he already knew after the previous years that the best exams are from practice, he decided to call one. He had the whole weekend to do it, so why not? He knew that a mental battle with a demon could take a different amount of time, depending on the difficulty of the demon and its strength. So he chose the one he drew last year. Asmodeus, the fourth prince of hell, the demon of wrath and destroyer of marriages. Demonology, that systematic science dealing with anything other than demons in their influence on human life associated with sin, was his favorite subject. With consecrated chalk, he painted a pentagram on the ground, outside a precisely defined space and inside it the symbols he needed exactly. He was primarily supposed to provide him with protection from evoked beings. He had to have the cardinal directions precisely oriented, otherwise it wouldn't have had such an effect. He recited the formula by the light of the candles that he

placed in the individual tips of the symbol, which also provided him with a sufficient source of light. The wind blew through the room even though no windows were open. It blew out half the candles. Clear evidence that a demon had appeared in the room. He smelled the sulphurous stench of sin in sulphur—mistakes, delusions, errors, or insults to the deities. He was sure that whatever he called it, it would always be a religious term. Finally he kissed his blessed ring and shouted:-„Show yourself demon!" With that, he threw the prepared handful of salt into the place of the pentagram. The invisible entity moved and collided with the tower of books, which collapsed. They all spilled onto the floor. Now he got rid of that demon again. He began to recite the formula from the old book and it flew out of his hand and disappeared somewhere in the flood of other books. He was making a complete mess all over the apartment, as was his habit. -„You demon! I'm not afraid of you!" He took white sage and lit it on fire. Another handful of salt and threw it in the corner. But he didn't count on the second possibility that the demon would corner him. He felt a sharp impact and was thrown to the far end of the room. It fell among other books. He got up and quickly ducked behind the door to another room which was his study. He immediately locked it behind him with a large, massive key that matched the heavy oak door, and he was anything but ready in it. At least it would be quiet here, but the demon's banging on the door was stressing him out and all the local panic. Even so, he still staggered the door with a hard oak prism. He breathed deeply. He wasn't sure of himself now if he had really summoned the one he wanted. -"Pride - Lucifer, greed - Mammon, envy - Leviathan, anger - Satan, fornication -

Asmodeus, gluttony - Beelzebub, laziness - Belphegor," he repeated the ranks of the princes of hell in his head. -„Well sure, I summoned Satan himself. Crucifix!" He cursed inside. He then walked over to the crystal ball and looked into it. He saw a large crowd of people in front of the town hall holding a demonstration, led by the druid Makumba, who was, among other things, a priest, seer, judge, poet, healer and scholar. There again, as usual once a quarter, i.e. a quarter, he read his demarche - a protest message to the lords at the town hall.

Usually, however, there were not such a bunch of people who developed the feeling that there should perhaps be defenestration and throwing bureaucrats out of the windows. Again this was the cause of the demon. Certainly, because the demonstration has what is called a demon in it. He also saw Eusachias, a fellow student, running around town chalking pentagram after pentagram everywhere and summoning demons with a book in hand. That's what I could have thought. He didn't pass the exam last week, so he takes revenge and practices the practical part again for the exam. He knows he can't afford another failure. The scumbag, with his permanently sarcastic expression on his face, how he constantly lied and cheated in exams. He acted thus throughout the city, as was similar to his malice. There was a rumor around the university that already in his teenage years he had experienced a severe demonic possession, during which two monks were needed, because one of them was affected by the power of exorcism. There was a so-called reverse exorcism, a rare case where the exorcism of a demon or other evil spirit from the body of a possessed person leads to the exorcism of the holy spirit from the body of a believer, a person possessed by dark forces. Therefore, a second monk

was needed to free the original one from the clutches of black magic. The demon that possessed him was called Pazúzu. Evil with a sickly face, bulging eyes, second horns, scaly body, four wings. If he is materialized to his physical form, he walks naked with his trailing penis at the end of which is a snake's head. He was always perceived as a bearer of evil forces, but he also had one good quality, which was that he protected infants. In the end, everything turned out well, but it did leave some traces on Eusachiáš, which were still reflected in him until the present time, and these were some of the cases of his behavior. That is why he remained registered on the university grounds as a symbolic specimen of a person who was direct evidence of the myth of reverse exorcism, which was exemplary and therefore without a doubt timeless for future possible studies. That will be something for the Archmage to do, if he really manages to summon some of them. It seemed more like he was summoning them into himself and then occasionally spat one out. But beware, it wasn't just any spit! Those were pieces of vomit. Well, that's disgusting! Sure, and they drink them down again with a glass of cognac. Vožrálecki couldn't do it! What about that? He saw figures coming out of the shadow of the night from around the corner a short distance away. Quite a few, but so far only their eyes in the higher center of their silhouettes are shining. Then they emerge from the darkness and Eusachiáš himself notices them. They have hoods and caps, some baladavas. Backpacks or textile shoulder bags. -„What are you writing, brother?" One of them speaks in a friendly voice to the frightened Eusachiáš. He had to pull out the plate again for that. -„That looks like some kind of symbol," another one of them speaks and steps out of the group closer to Eusachiáš and

starts looking at the sign on the wall of a side house in the street. Only now, when Eusachias had drunk again, did his vision improve. He finally recognized those who had startled him. Teenage boys. Hopefully they won't be Nazis, he thought, as others headed in his direction. He heard a kind of rustling from one of them that had just passed behind him. He quickly looked back, thinking it was a weapon, when in his subconscious, it reminded him more of a baby rattle. It was an ordinary spray, with which he began to paint something on the wall. - „Are you solo or a crew? The first to approach asked again. Eusachias saw in his face how, he is still such an innocent. - „That looks pretty cool, can we start listing it too?" To which he already saw how a boy next to him outlined it with his red spray. - „Pentagram," he started to answer the first question only now. One boy who was hanging it on the wall turned to him with a smiling face and just said: "Thick!" Then he went back to work. Eusachias had to wince again as he could not believe his eyes. Archibald had to step away from the magic ball, his mouth was twisting. Now he had to go to the library. He looked through it and found what he was looking for. Book by Domynick - Phobia. This is exactly what he needed. He flipped through the page of incantations. He found what he was looking for. Instant demon control spell. He analyzed it syntactically and prepared its correct pronunciation in his head, and only then began to repeat the formula with the fingers of his right hand extended to the breaking door. He felt his mental power work through and the slamming of the door stopped. He continued, he had to make sure the demon disappeared. He repeated the formula over and over until his tongue became tangled. Then he closed the book briskly and returned it to the library. He reached the door and unbolted it.

In the room there was such a thing as only a demon would leave there, but there is no sight or sound of it. It was Sunday out of the blue. So the hours outside in the square, where he had a view from his living room window, spoke. There he saw a crowd of people gathering again in the square with pitchforks and shovels and heading straight for the town hall. He wondered how and if he should run out. For all he knew, there were probably more demons in the streets, hence the people, from the word demo. But there has always been one problem with demons, and that is that when it comes to summoning them, each of them has a different summoning ritual and the same with summoning them back to hell. Whether it was Almadel's art, which was based on Jewish traditions, otherwise also called the smaller sprouts of Solomon, or Paula's art, it was always about ritual magic. At that moment, however, he noticed that they were actually just pentagrams with seals, the most basic ones that could only be summoned with an incantation formula. And revoke in the same way. No bloody sacrifices or complex astronomical calculations of date or time. Archibald had something in him that Eusachias by no means had - eudaimonium, or good spirit. You can also call it happiness or well-being. That was the reason why he was successful. He turned back into the room and there he saw the last part of the library that remained in its place filled at least partially with chronologically arranged books. He slowly walked over to them and then took one of them out. Lemegeton Theurgia Goetia. This medieval grimoire that contained 103 demons and evil spirits should be enough for him. He then grabbed the doorknob of his

apartment and ran outside onto the cobblestones in his leather boots.

Kevin was home alone again. He knew the robbers were due to arrive this week. He didn't know what movie to watch anymore. But then he discovered the Saw film series. He played all the parts. At first he was afraid, but gradually he began to feel fascinated by it. He identified with Jigsaw as the main character. He told himself that it was him in his old age or that he would be his scholar. And he decided to finally close the endless loop of wet bandits breaking into him. He began to study engineering, mechanics and physics. He concluded that he would make a good engineer. He drew up his trap plan for his entire house. From the basement to the attic. Every room, every door, every step. That night he was locked in just his room with bingo and playstation and loud trap. While wet bandits were dying brutally throughout his house.

Hunting

A group of experienced demon hunters gathered in the garden of the caravan near Humpfield. The tenant requested them separately, despite the fact that they knew each other from events where they competed. But here they were on the same side. The task was clear - hunt the night terrors. They prepared a candle on the table in the caravan. -„Bacha, that leg from the table is rotten and wobbly," said Bonek. -„That would be my death," replied Salaman from the other side of the table. He couldn't speak much, he was from the south. The far south. Bonek had already noticed. He meant if the table with the candle fell on him. The candle was enchanted, supposed to attract terrors. It wouldn't go down well with Salaman. He had respect for fire. Bonek knew him from earlier days of

HUNTING, WHEN THEY TECHNICALLY COMPETED WITH EACH OTHER, YET PARTIALLY UNKNOWINGLY COVERED EACH OTHER'S BACKS AND LIVES. NEXT SAT DONALD, HIS GAS BLOWER IN HAND. A GUN WITH GAS CAPSULES THAT BLOW THE GAS AROUND. BONEK KNEW IT. -„WHAT ABOUT THE GAS BLOWER?" -„WHAT ABOUT HIM?" -„I DON'T KNOW IF I HAVE ENOUGH WIDOW IMMUNITY FOR EVERYONE HERE," SAID BONEK. -„I DON'T NEED HER ANYMORE," ANNOUNCED DONALD AND COUNTED THE HAIR ABOVE HIS EYEBROWS. HE HAD A TATTOO THERE. A HALLOWED SYMBOL THAT GRANTED IMMUNITY TO THE WEARER. -„I HAVE ONE TOO, BUT SAGE-LIKE," SAID HANZ WITH A GOLD CHAIN AROUND HIS NECK. -„THEN LIGHT IT HERE," MICHELANGELO TOLD HIM WITH A KNIFE WITH RUNES. SO HANZ CRUSHED IT OUT OF THE BAG AND WRAPPED IT IN A BUNDLE. HE LIT A FIRE AND LET THE WHOLE CARAVAN SMELL IT. THE EFFECT OF THIS MAGICAL HERB COATED THE LUNGS AND THROAT, EVEN THE MOUTH, NOSTRILS AND EYES WITH AN IMMUNE COATING AGAINST GASES AND POISONS. YOU DON'T NEED IT AGAINST NIGHT TERRORS, THEY JUST HAVE LONG KILLER CLAWS, BUT THE GASES ARE EFFECTIVE AGAINST THEM. NOT AS

ADVANCED AS EASTERN MAGIC, BUT IT CAN BE SEEN THAT TECHNOLOGY HAS NOT FALLEN ASLEEP. A CHOIR IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DARK FORCES. BONEK WAS SLIGHTLY NERVOUS AND EVEN SKEPTICAL OF THE SAGE-LIKE WIDOW THAT HANZ HAD, SO HE PREFERRED TO SET FIRE TO HIS WIDOW, WHOM HE ALREADY HAD BUILT UP TRUST IN. THEY LEFT THE DOORS OF THE CARAVAN OPEN, AS WELL AS THE WINDOWS, SO THAT THE CANDLE WOULD SUBLIMATE BETTER. THEY FELT THAT THE EXPECTED MOMENT WAS SLOWLY COMING. THE CANDLE FLAME WAVED AND BOUNCED. HE SPUN IN THE EVER-RISING WIND. MICHELANGELO, THE YOUNGEST OF THE MOUNTED ONES, GRIPPED HIS DAGGER TIGHTLY IN HIS HAND. HE KEPT WATCHING FROM THE OPEN DOOR OF THE CARAVAN. THE CANDLE WENT OUT, ONLY SMOKE ROSE ABOVE IT. A SECOND OF SILENCE. THERE WAS A SCRATCHING SOUND ON THE DOOR AND CEILING. THE MOON SHONE OUTSIDE TO HELP THE WITCHERS. MICHELANGELO STEPPED OUT BLADE FIRST AND INSTINCTIVELY WAVED HIS KNIFE AT THE FEAR OF THE CARAVAN. HE PASSED. THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. -„THEY ARE HERE....," BONEK WHISPERED. AT THAT MOMENT, MICHELANGELO LOST HIS

FOCUS AND A BIG STRONG BLACK CLAW HIT HIM ON THE SHOULDER FROM BEHIND. MICHELANGELO TURNED TO RETURN THE BLOW. BUT HE SAW SOMETHING THAT CHANGED HIS VIEW OF THE WORLD. AND SEEING A NIGHT TERROR LIVE FOR THE FIRST TIME. BIG BLACK EYES AND BIG TEETH. THEY STINK AND ARE FAST AS HELL. MICHELANGELO DID NOT HAVE TIME TO COVER THE ATTACK AND ENDED UP WITH CLAWS IN HIS STOMACH. -,,WOO JIN FLEX!" HANZ CRIED OUT. THE SPELL FROM HIS GOLDEN CHAIN DEFUSING THE IMPULSE OF PROTECTIVE MAGIC. IT THREW BACK THE NIGHT TERRORS. -,,GUYS. I NEED HELP!"

DONALD WAS ALREADY STANDING UNDER THE DOOR SPRAYING GAS. BUT YOU HAVE TO SPRAY IT IN THE FACE OF NIGHT TERRORS. OTHERWISE IT WILL ONLY DELAY HIM. HANZ WAS ALREADY HOLDING MIKELENGEL AT BAY AND DONALD JOINED IN AS SALAMANDER STOOD BEHIND HIM AND LET A PROTECTIVE COCOON GROW FROM THE ROOTS AROUND THE CARAVAN. A BONEK APPEARED NEXT TO THE CARAVAN AND A SECOND BONEK RIGHT NEXT TO HIM. THEY BOTH RAN AND JUMPED OVER THE ROOT GUARD. A FIGHT TOOK PLACE BEHIND HER. THEY PULLED MICHELANGELO IN

WITH THE WORDS: "HE'S KAPUT." -,,NO! MICHELANGELO MUST NOT DIE," HE TOOK HIS CHAIN AND PUT IT ON MIKE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE UTTERED AN INCANTATION TO STABILIZE THE WOUNDED AND A RESCUE SIGNAL TO A SPACE OF TEN KILOMETERS AS THE CROW FLIES. WARLOCKS AND OTHER PEOPLE OR CREATURES FAMILIAR WITH MAGIC ARE REALLY RARE, SO THERE IS A 7% CHANCE THAT SOMEONE OR SOMETHING WILL PICK IT UP. DONALD TURNED TO GO FILL THE SCARECROWS, BUT ANOTHER BONEK SNATCHED HIM FROM HIS HAND. THE CLONE MOTIONED FOR HIM TO BE QUIET AND THE NEXT MOMENT HE HEARD A SHOT OF GAS FROM THE GAS BLASTER TERRORIZING BONEK'S CLONES. BONEK'S CLONES DESTROYED THE NIGHT TERRORS ONCE OR TWICE. MAINLY THANKS TO HELPING OTHERS. THEIR MYSTICAL POWER IS SO STRONG THAT WEAKER SPELLCASTERS WOULD EXPERIENCE BREAKOUTS ON THEIR FACES AND BODIES IF THEY WERE NOT SUFFICIENTLY STRENGTHENED BY THE WIDOW. GAS FROM THE CLONED GAS BLOWERS WAS EVERYWHERE TOO. IT WAS ALL OVER NOW, THEY WERE SITTING AT THE TABLE IN THE CARAVAN OR IN FRONT OF IT. MICHELANGELO WAS LYING IN

THE GREEN BIOCONTAINER NUMBER FOUR. BONEK SET HIS WIDOW ON FIRE TO HEAL HIMSELF. -,,THE WORST THING ABOUT SCARECROWS IS THAT THE GAS HAS TO BE SPRAYED DIRECTLY INTO THEIR FACES, OTHERWISE IT WILL ONLY WEAKEN THEM. AND WITH THOSE LONG CLAWS, IT'S HARD. ESPECIALLY IF THERE WAS ONE, BUT THREE?" -,,I WON'T FORGET THIS FOR A LONG TIME." SALAMANDER SPOKE UP, LOOKING AT HIS SCRATCHED KNUCKLES COVERED IN BLOOD. -,,NA," HE HANDED HIM HIS PASSIONATE WIDOW TO HEAL HIMSELF A LITTLE. "IT WON'T CURE IT COMPLETELY, BUT IT'S BETTER THAN NOTHING." SALAMANDER SUCKED. HANZ AND DONALD WERE OUTSIDE BURNING THEIR WIDOW SAGE. SHE WAS WEAKER, BUT THEY HAD ENOUGH OF HER. -,,DARK MAGIC SURROUNDED US THAT NIGHT SO MUCH THAT IT CUT THE SIGNAL. IT'S HARD TO SAVE MICHELANGELO LIKE THIS." DONALD INSPECTED HIS GAS BLOWER. IT HAD A BROKEN MECHANISM. SO BONEK RETURNED IT TO HIM. PERHAPS HE WILL GET A FAIRER SHARE OF THE REWARD FOR MICHELANGELO, BUT HE DIDN'T WISH FOR HIM TO SHINE.

ART DEALER

CASHPAR WAS THE NAME OF THE ART DEALER WHO OWNED HIS FOUR-STORY SHOP IN THE CENTER OF TOWN. PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE CAME TO HIM TO SHOP. YOUNG, OLD, FAT, THIN, WOMEN, MEN, IN SHORT, ANYONE. WHAT MR. CASHPAR SOLD WERE MAINLY MYSTERIOUS AND UNSEEN ITEMS. THAT'S WHY SHE ALSO POSTED A SIGN ABOVE THE ENTRANCE STATING THAT ITEMS ONCE SOLD CANNOT BE RETURNED. AND ABOVE HER A CADUCEUS, THE EMBLEM OF MERCHANTS. TWO SNAKES WRAPPED AROUND A STICK. THIS SYMBOL ENSURED FERTILITY AND HARMONY IN TRADE. THIS IS PRIMARILY BECAUSE SOMEONE CAME BACK TO HIM EVERY DAY WITH COMPLAINTS AND CLAIMS THAT THE ITEM DID NOT WORK AS THEY ACTUALLY WANTED. UNFORTUNATELY, NONE OF THEM EVER BOUGHT BACK, AT MOST THEY HAD THE ITEM REPLACED WITH ITEMS OF THE SAME PRICE. BUT HE ALSO HAD HIS POSITIVE SIDE AND THE FACT THAT HE

BOUGHT ALL MYSTICAL OR ENCHANTED ITEMS OF ALL KINDS WITHOUT CONDITION. FROM AT FIRST GLANCE ORDINARY TO VARIOUS JEWELRY, OR BOOKS AND CLOTHES. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT EACH OF THEM WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL. PEOPLE IN THE CITY AND THE SURROUNDING AREA, AND IN FACT WHEREVER THEY HEARD ABOUT CASHPAR'S HOUSE, THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT. CASHPAR'S UNIQUENESS ALSO STOOD OUT FROM HIS NAME. ALL TRANSACTIONS WERE DONE IN CASH AND NEVER OTHERWISE. OVER TIME, EVERYWHERE, EVEN IN THE MOST DISTANT SURROUNDINGS, AT LEAST ONE PERSON LIVED WHO TOOK SOMETHING HOME FROM HIS SHOP. THE MOST FAMOUS STORIES THAT WERE PASSED DOWN ORALLY ARE KNOWN TO BE:

MAGIC BASKET

ONE DAY A MAN HERE BOUGHT A WICKER BASKET WITH A LEATHER FLAP. THE FACT THAT IT WAS WRITTEN EVERYWHERE THAT IT WAS AN ENCHANTED ITEM, HE TOOK IT AS A JOKE AND THUS DID NOT PAY ANY ATTENTION TO IT. HE WAS EVEN MORE SURPRISED WHEN HE WENT WITH HIM TO THE FOREST TO PICK MUSHROOMS. HE WALKED FOR ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES UNTIL HE CAME ACROSS A LARGE BOG FULL OF FOXES. HE KNELT DOWN BESIDE THEM AND OPENED HIS POCKETKNIFE. HE TURNED TO THE BASKET TO OPEN IT, BUT WHEN HE LOOKED AGAIN AT THE MUSHROOM SPOT, HE FROZE. THE MUSHROOMS DISAPPEARED. HE WALKED AROUND THE PLACE AND POKED UNDER THE GROUND WHERE THEY WERE. THEY WERE NOWHERE. ANGRY, HE TOOK THE BASKET TO GO FURTHER WHEN HE NOTICED THAT THE BASKET WAS FULL OF FOXES. CLEANED AND PERFECTLY PUT TOGETHER. AT FIRST HE DIDN`T UNDERSTAND IT, BUT WHEN HE WENT FURTHER THROUGH THE FOREST WITH THE OPEN BASKET, HE SAW MUSHROOMS FLYING INTO HIS BASKET BY THEMSELVES. ALL AMAZED, HE RAN LIKE THIS THROUGH THE FOREST UNTIL THE BASKET WAS FULL. HE THEN RETURNED HOME. HE SAT DOWN

AT THE TABLE TO TAKE THE MUSHROOMS, CUT THEM, DRY SOME OF THEM AND PICKLE SOME OF THEM. HE TOOK A HANDFUL OF THEM OUT ON THE TABLE AND REACHED FOR MORE, BUT AS HE WAS ABOUT TO PUT THEM ON THE TABLE, HE NOTICED THAT THE FIRST HANDFUL HAD DISAPPEARED BACK INTO THE BASKET. HE PLACED THE OTHER HANDFUL ON THE TABLE AND REACHED FURTHER INTO THE BASKET, BUT THE SAME THING HAPPENED. SO HE TOOK THE WHOLE BASKET TO POUR IT OUT, BUT WHEN HE TURNED IT OVER, THE MUSHROOMS NOT ONLY DISAPPEARED FROM THE BASKET, BUT COMPLETELY. SHAKING HIS HEAD TO SEE IF HE WAS CRAZY, HE WENT BACK INTO THE FOREST, WHERE HE FOUND THE MUSHROOMS IN THE SAME PLACE FROM WHICH THEY HAD FLOWN INTO THE BASKET BEFORE. CASHPAR DID NOT WANT TO TAKE THE BASKET BACK, AND THE CURRENT OWNER OF THE BASKET DID NOT WANT ANOTHER OBJECT. SO IN THE END HE GAVE IT TO A NEIGHBOR WHO DOES NOT GO FOR MUSHROOMS AND NO ONE EVER HEARD OF THE BASKET AGAIN.

TORNADO FAN

A MAN BOUGHT A FAN FROM CASHPAR ONE SUMMER. HE BROUGHT IT HOME AND PLUGGED IT INTO AN ELECTRIC WIRE. HE PRESSED THE BUTTON AND THE FAN BEGAN TO ROTATE ON ITS NINETY DEGREE AXIS. THE PROPELLER WAS RUNNING AT FULL POWER, BUT NO WIND WAS FELT. WHAT HE DIDN'T NOTICE WAS THAT A TORNADO HAD APPEARED OUTSIDE, ENGULFING ANYTHING IN ITS PATH. LEAVES, TREES, THINGS AND OBJECTS. SO HE TURNED OFF THE FAN AND THE TORNADO DISAPPEARED. THINGS FELL APART. HE TURNED IT BACK ON AND THE TORNADO APPEARED AGAIN, BUT THE FAN DIDN'T WORK. SO HE WENT TO EXCHANGE IT BACK TO CASHPAR'S SHOP, WHERE HE WANTED TO EXCHANGE IT FOR A CHANDELIER THAT LIT WITHOUT ELECTRICITY, BUT CASHPAR CHASED HIM AWAY WITH A STICK.

CASHPAR'S SHOP WAS A LEGACY OF HIS ANCESTORS. ACCORDING TO FAMILY HISTORICAL SOURCES, IT WAS BUILT ON AN ENERGY FIELD. THE SOURCE OF MAGICAL POWER WAS DISCOVERED BY HIS GREAT-GRANDFATHER'S, SENTIENT WAND-MAKER'S, USE OF A WOODEN COMMA - A YPSILON-SHAPED WAND, OR HYBRID. THE FIRST GROUND FLOOR WAS DEDICATED TO THE GENERAL EQUIPMENT OF THE HOUSE. THERE WAS A COUCH THAT IS NOT COMFORTABLE FOR ABSOLUTELY ANYONE. A FAN THAT CREATES A SMALL PRIVATE TORNADO, LIGHTS THAT SHINE WITHOUT AN OUTLET, A HANGER THAT CAN STORE HANGING CLOTHES, AS WELL AS A SHOE RACK OR A TABLE THAT CANNOT BE SOILED SIMPLY ABSORB ANY LIQUID, INCLUDING OIL OR OINTMENT. IT CAN ALSO EASILY HANDLE GLUE, IT WON'T STAY. HE HAS THINGS GUARDED IN THE BASEMENT THAT CANNOT BE SOLD FOR

MANY REASONS, PRIMARILY BECAUSE THEY WERE DANGEROUS. THE IRON LORD, MEDIEVAL TORTURE INSTRUMENTS, DEATH MASKS, CABALISTIC MACHINES AND OCCULT ACCESSORIES. ON THE FIRST FLOOR, HOWEVER, HE HAD VARIOUS USEFUL THINGS, SUCH AS ENDLESS PENS, BOOKS, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND SO ON, PERHAPS VARIOUS RAW MATERIALS. HE HAD CLOTHES ON THE SECOND FLOOR, JEWELRY ON THE THIRD. HE HAD A STUDY ON THE FOURTH FLOOR AND LIVED IN THE ATTIC. HIS GREATEST TREASURE WAS A BOOK OF BOOKS. IT WAS OVER A MILLION PAGES LONG AND CONTAINED ALL THE BOOKS THAT HAVE EVER BEEN, ARE, OR WILL BE WRITTEN. ITS CONTENT WAS PERSONALIZED AND CHANGING, THAT IS, IT SHOWED EACH OF ITS READERS WHAT THEY NEEDED AND EVERYONE HAD IT DIFFERENTLY. IT HAD NO AUTHOR. SHE WAS INSIDE A GLASS CASE ON A PEDESTAL. SHE WAS UNSELLABLE. HE DOESN`T EVEN KNOW HOW MANY BUYERS HE TURNED DOWN. HE KNEW THAT SHE HELD SOME KIND OF POWER AND THAT IT MUST NOT BE ABUSED. NO THIEF DARED BREAK INTO CASHPAR`S HOUSE. THE MAGNETIC FIELD WAS DOING ITS THING. PEOPLE HERE ARE ABLE TO LEAVE A FORTUNE FOR SOMETHING THAT USUALLY COSTS A FEW CROWNS. GOOD

LUCK AND BAD LUCK AT THE SAME TIME, BECAUSE CASHPAR BUYS THE SAME EXPENSIVE ITEMS. THEY ARE USUALLY ENCHANTED OR CURSED OR ARTISTIC. HENCE THE BIG PRICES. HIS FAMILY BUSINESS SPIRIT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR FINDING A BUYER AND MAKING A PROFIT EVERY TIME.

OLD RECORD PLAYER

I FOUND AN OLD RECORD PLAYER AND SOME DUSTY RECORDS IN MY GREAT-AUNT'S ATTIC. I BROUGHT THEM DOWN FROM THAT IMAGINARY HEAVEN. HOW HAPPY IT MADE ME. THE FOLDING STAIRS CREAK SO MUCH THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ANYONE TO LUBRICATE THEM. I DUSTED OFF EVERYTHING I HAD BROUGHT DOWN FROM THE GROUND AND PLUGGED THE RECORD PLAYER INTO THE ELECTRICAL OUTLET. FORTUNATELY, IT WAS STILL FUNCTIONAL. THE NEEDLE WAS SHARP AND WELL PRESERVED. I'M SURPRISED THE DEVICE WORKED. I PUT THE FIRST PLATE ON IT SLOWLY PUT THE NEEDLE ON IT. THE RECORDING STARTED, FIRST THE NOISE. THEN THE VOICE CAME. HE WAS DARK AND AUSTERE. HE RECITED FORMULAS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE. LATIN? OR SPANISH? I WASN'T SURE. THEN THERE WAS A MOVEMENT - A WHISTLING OBJECT. A WOMAN'S CRY OF PAIN FOLLOWED. THE SOUND OF LIQUID FLOW AND OTHER MYSTERIOUS FORMULAS TO WHICH THE FIRST RHYTHMIC SOUNDS OF BOWLS AND CYMBALS WERE ADDED. SLOWLY AND FROM A DISTANCE HE APPROACHED IN A STRANGE RITUAL RHYTHM ACCOMPANIED BY A STOMPING DANCE DANCE, A KIND OF CHARDASH THAT CAUGHT ME

IN THE VERY BOWELS OF MY BONES, I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. I WAS POSSESSED BY A VERY STRANGE POWER OF RHYTHMIC MAGIC, WHICH WAS PAID OFF WITH THE BLOOD OF SOMEONE WHOSE LAST SCREAM GAVE THE RECORDING SERIOUSNESS AND PERHAPS THEREFORE ALSO A POWER THAT COULD CONTROL A PERSON. THIS TRANCE WITH RITUAL DANCE, WHICH I COULD NOT OVERCOME WITH ANY WILLPOWER, STUCK WITH ME FOR A FEW MORE MINUTES UNTIL THE RECORD ENDED. OUT OF BREATH AND SCARED, I FELL TO THE GROUND. I PREFERRED NOT TO REVEAL WHAT WAS HAPPENING ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BOARD. HOWEVER, I DECIDED TO GET RID OF THIS TERRIFYING OBJECT, AND MR. CASHPAR HELPED ME WITH THAT IN THE FORM OF CASH.

METAL DETECTOR

THIS INITIALLY ORDINARY METAL DETECTOR IS, HOWEVER, NON-FUNCTIONAL FOR THE UNCURIOUS AND THE TIMID. FOR AN UNKNOWN REASON, THE SUBJECT COULD ONLY SEARCH FOR MAGICAL OR OTHERWISE ENERGETICALLY CHARGED BODIES THAT WERE SUPPOSED TO BRING A BLESSING OR A CURSE TO THE FINDER. BUT NOT ONLY LITERALLY, IT ALWAYS DEPENDED ON OTHER ASPECTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL WEARERS. IN MORE POPULAR CULTURES, THESE AURAS COULD BE RECOGNIZED IN A LIGHTER FORM IN THE FORM OF LUCK OR BAD LUCK. HOWEVER, THE SEARCH ENGINE, AS THE MAIN SUBJECT OF THIS SHORT STORY, WAS NOT CURSED, ONLY BROKEN FOR SOME. CERTAIN OBJECTS OR PERSONS WITH IT COULD REACTIVATE IT IF THEY GOT CLOSE ENOUGH. THE SEEKER STARTED BEEPING EVERY TIME IT DETECTED SOMETHING THAT TRIGGERED IT AGAIN. SOME LIKENED THIS PHENOMENON TO CHANCE OR A RANDOM FUNCTION OF THE TECHNICAL SYSTEM INSIDE THE DETECTOR. HOWEVER, UPON REVIEW, IT WAS INTERNALLY INTACT, AND ABOVE ALL - IT DIDN`T NEED CHARGING. IT ACTED QUITE EXCEPTIONALLY AND ONLY FOR BRIGHT INDIVIDUALS

NOMINALLY, BUT IF YOU PLUGGED IT INTO THE SOCKET, BECAUSE OF THE BATTERIES, NOTHING HAPPENED.

PALLADIUM CARTRIDGE

ONE DAY, THE WRITER BROUGHT HOME FROM CASHPAR'S STORE A COLORFUL MULTIPACK CARTRIDGE FROM PALLADIUM. IT GAVE HIM A STRANGE FEELING THAT HE HAD GAINED SOMETHING. HOWEVER, NOT AN ORDINARY ONE. HE SUSPECTED THAT IF HE KEPT IT WELL AT HOME AND RAN AWAY FROM IT, HE MIGHT ACTUALLY ENCOUNTER SOMETHING LIKE THIS IN A DIFFERENT FORM. IN LIVESTOCK. AND REALLY. HE DECIDED TO TRAVEL TO FOREIGN PARTS OF THE WEST, WHERE HE WAS IMMEDIATELY GREETED BY FOUR WOMEN AT THE AIRPORT WHERE HE LANDED IN FIRST CLASS. JUST LIKE HIS COLORFUL MULTIPACK REALLY SHINED. ONE WAS OF ASIAN APPEARANCE. THE OTHER WAS SOME KIND OF AFRICAN. THIRD HISPANIC. FOURTH ARABIC. THEY HELD EACH OTHER AS IF THEIR BOND WAS INDEED MADE OF PALLADIUM. IT COULD WELL BE USED IN JEWELRY. AND THE WRITER? IT HELD AND WAS CONDUCTIVE AS IF MADE OF TITANIUM.

TIMERULER WATCH

THAT'S HOW A MAN WITH AN UNIMPORTANT NAME ONCE BOUGHT A WRISTWATCH FROM CASHPAR'S SHOP. NOT EXPENSIVELY EMBELLISHED WITH A SCUFFED LEATHER STRAP. HE WENT WITH THEM FOR A FEW DAYS AND EVERYTHING WENT WELL FOR HIM. WHERE HE COULD, HE WAS EXACTLY THERE. BUT THEN ONE DAY HE FORGOT TO PUT THEM ON HIS ARM AGAIN IN THE MORNING AND WHEN HE RAN OUT OF THE HOUSE TO GO TO WORK, HE SUDDENLY GOT LOST IN TIME. OF COURSE, TIME IS TIED TO SPACE AND THEREFORE HAS LOST ITS COMPLETE ORIENTATION. THANKS TO HIS REMAINING PRESENCE OF MIND, HE DIZZILY RETURNED TO HIS DWELLING, WHERE HE WRESTLED WITH SPACE-TIME FOR A WHILE UNTIL HE PUT ON THE WATCH. "SUCH A THIEF OF TIME!" HE ALLEGEDLY CURSED AND WENT TO RETURN THEM TO CASHPAR IN THE SHOP. HOWEVER, HE SHOWED HIM THAT IF HE TURNS THEM BACK CORRECTLY, THANKS TO THEM, HE CAN GO BACK IN TIME TO THAT LOST MORNING WHEN HE FORGOT TO PUT THEM ON EVEN WITH A WOUND, SO HE BETTER NOT EVEN TAKE THEM OFF. AT THAT HE THREW THEM AT CASHPAR'S FEET WITH THE ADDITION:-„CLOSE YOUR

DEVILISH TRINKETS AND SHOP AND GO PRAY TO GOD FOR THE SALVATION OF YOUR SOUL BEFORE YOU SELL IT!" HOWEVER, CASHPAR ONLY PRAYED TO HIS ARTIFACTS AND SPUN THE CLOWN.

Silvius' Experiences

Hawaii

-„ Silvius Felix! You crazy old man!" his grandmother called to him as he was leaving their home. He remembered it fondly because he had finally escaped her clutches where he had lost most of his long life. Now he was finally gone, in Hawaii. The right start of retirement and related activities. He had been looking forward to this all his life, when he would have enough of everything to be able to travel wherever he wanted without any problems. But he really didn't want to go anywhere anymore. He was already where he wanted to be. On the beach with a pineapple cocktail. He wore sunglasses on his nose and a Hawaiian orchid wreath around his neck.

A group of children ran past him, and suddenly an unknown man in a hat was sitting next to him, and the dark lenses of his glasses were shining beneath him. -„Have you ever heard of the local terror of the seas called Niuhi?" The stranger asked in a polite tone. -„No, not yet," replied Silvius. "In that case, don't hesitate to visit the north beach tonight," the man told him, and as he appeared, he also disappeared. Silvius calmly finished his fruity cocktail before applying sunscreen. universal enough to not burn, but at the same time taste some bronze. After a short time he fell asleep for a long time, as is customary at his age. He didn't wake up until sunset. The surf washed over his feet. He got up and walked to his hotel on the edge of the beach for dinner. He then got dressed and set out for the northern beach as advised by the mysterious man. Since it was across the island, he hired a dragon. The driver asked for a more precise position to stop, and Silvius was not surprised. The north coast was a very large area. So he asked where the

fishing was held. He couldn't remember exactly what the word was anymore. Niuhi? But the frightened face of the carter convinced him that his memory was not yet of old iron. The driver explained to him the meaning of the word – fear. The man behind the wheel of the used car continued. The pronunciation he was using sounded angry to Silvius, it was likely swearing. Then he stopped. The surroundings were beautifully monotonous. An endless beach on one side and an endless jungle on the other.

–„When will he want to return?" The driver asked in a broken voice, tapping the digital time display on the body of the car with his right index finger. Silvius was not well informed enough to answer immediately. For some unknown reason, a slight tremor came over him, a tremor that had started to manifest in him after the incident with the bird visions back at his resort. A kind of inner restlessness gripped him and every once in a while he made himself known. –„I'll take a walk on the beach and come back to you, okay?" He gave him a bill with his shaking hand and opened the taxi door. Meanwhile, the taxi driver picked up a dictionary and started flipping through it. He walked along the beach and was mesmerized by the rising waves. He didn't even notice that he had appeared at the rock leading from the jungle through the beach to the ocean. Only the fires moving towards her caught his attention. He heard bamboo drums and a shout. Painful and penetrating. His instinct of self-preservation advised him to return, but his famous curiosity

forced him to go deeper. Explore it. He climbed through the brush up the hill past palm trees and over small rocks until he climbed to the top to see directly over the overhang to the sea. There was a group of strangely dressed people. It seemed almost ritualistic to him. Many of them had torches and the rest had tribalistic musical instruments that he had heard before. In the middle of it all, on the edge of the overhang, two muscular men were holding a woman, and in front of them stood a man with a rattle and a mask - a shaman. -„The monstrous eyes of Niuha, in the cruel sea of the deep, they burn. Alas, oh alas, where is my kind left? When you're nearing your destination, when the wili-wili bush is blooming, the shark god's jaws will close, O blue sea, O dark sea. Now the last drop of blood will scan me. Why must I die, what remains of me, foaming sea of divine kane! What's left of me, what I have of the beautiful dances, is now being eaten by the shark monster..." The shaman finished and ordered the

men who were holding the woman. They threw her down from the cliff even with her loud scream. There she thrashed around for a while until the shark god swam up. A giant prehistoric shark and it silenced her with one gulp. -„Some women are so perfect that no man deserves them. These women belong to the gods," concluded the ritual shaman on the overhang. After that, the crowd slowly made their way back into the jungle from whence they came. Silvius, wide-eyed at what he saw, went back to the cab and prayed it would still be there.
Thank God she was standing. -„ Mr. Driver!" Silvius was shaking all over with his tremor. -„I saw him! Niuhi!" The driver, who understood a little, turned white and quickly started.-„We have to do something! They threw a woman at him!" Silvius kept calling. He took the driver's dictionary and started flipping through it frantically. The driver noticed. -„Niuhi?" he asked, pointing with his finger to the sea as deathly white as a wall.-„Yes! Yes! I saw him with my own

eyes!" Silvius repeated. The driver took out his cell phone and dialed a number. He waited for a while and got out of the car, then began to speak fluently in his native language. Silvius only recognized the word Niuhi a few times. After that, the man hung up and got back into the car. -„Can we go?" The driver asked, "No! We have to do something!" Silvius demanded. The driver measured him with a glance and took the dictionary from his hands, flipping through the pages. After a while, it came out:-„I called a friend, he sent the king here with hunters," the driver spoke.-„Then we'll wait," said Silvius .-„Ok!" The driver agreed, but threatened with his wide-eyed index finger and tapped the taximeter. -„Yes, please," Silvius answered him and took out the fruit left over from dinner. The driver got out and lit a cigarette. In less than an hour, a medium-sized truck arrived truck and several hunters jumped out of it. They were all strangely dressed in traditional Hawaiian costumes. They were armed with handguns. Finally, the truck

driver also got out and started talking unintelligibly with the cab driver. Silvius also got out and waited to see what would happen. The taxi driver immediately whistled at him. "Show them where!" So Silvius went down the beach, to the cliff, followed by a small party of shark hunters and their king and priest. He led them up to the cliff from where the woman had been thrown. Not a trace of her remained. After the ritual, a few remains remained .-„Kahuna," the king addressed the priest. They started talking with other hunters and pointed in the direction of the forest.-„If they worship Niuhi, why don't they sacrifice themselves," the king spoke out loud in a language that even Silvius understood. Then they set out into the jungle. It was deep and wild. Full of the croaking of frogs and the chirping of insects. After a while they found themselves behind large burdocks from which they could see into the camp of the Niuhi worshippers. They were just dancing around the fire. The king gave the order to attack and the hunters

rushed at the worshipers and all of them they killed without promising. Silvius covered his eyes until it was over. -„Kahuna!" The priest king called to the last of the worshippers, the shaman himself.-„Hmm, kahuna," said the priest, stabbing the shaman in the heart with his ritual dagger. Then they dragged the dead men behind their dwelling. They whistled at Silvius, who was crouching in the wili-wili bush. And he climbed out.-„What are you going to do with those dead bodies? He asked horrified.-„We will quarter," answered the king.-„And throw into the sea for Niuhi," added the kahuna. Silvius just watched as the hunters dragged freshly chopped bamboos and fashioned them into various tools. Rafts and litters. The rest the hunters quartered the dead worshipers behind their flimsy shelters.

Scotland

Silvius Felix climbed out of the terminal and someone was already waiting for him with a huge sign with

his name on it. The mysterious man stood there again. -„So here I am. You flew before me?" Silvius Felix began at once. The man was smiling sensitively. He was silent and just guided him through the airport. Silvius caught the tremor again and took the sign with his name on it. -„And what is your name?" he asked him. Instead of answering, the man opened the cab door and said. -„Get in, hurry. He will take you to a family that already knows you. Do you remember Clementine?" "You mean my student?" -„Yes here. He's from Scotland, isn't he?" Silvius was silent in astonishment. -„Well, well, dry up then," they said goodbye. He closed the taxi door and greeted the taxi driver. No one was in the rearview mirror anymore. They reached the family's house and he rang the bell. The door opened and the whole family was standing there. Tall father, broad mother, bespectacled Klementýna and her little brothers. All equally beaming from the visit. -„What are you doing here, actually? Dad immediately asked at the head of the table at the

joint dinner. -„Any research? Or only recreationally?" -„Don't bombard him with so many questions," interjected the mother of the family. -„Even if he only came to visit us, it's very nice of him." -„And also polite, when I was with him at the ornithological station for several years, Mr. Felix." Klementýna also joined in the end. Silvius had no choice but to agree. He didn't worry much about what he should and shouldn't do here, he was happy that he could eat and drink well after the long flight and finally rest his head. After dinner he asked for a shower and a room. He was given the attic where his grandmother used to live. -„We apologize for the mess, but little Klement always comes here to play and he does it the way it is here," said the mother. "No, no, I'm not coming here," Klement said on the contrary. -„I hope grandma didn't die here," Silvius wanted to know. "No, no," his mother consoled him. -„He's in a retirement home now, you know, old people." Silvius preferred to remain silent, he himself was a pensioner. He

was left here alone, among the boxes. He closed his eyes and lay for about two hours when he was awakened by a soft voice: -„A sock worn for 14 days under the pillow brings better dreams. I am me! I am me! There is no acorn yet. It fell from a tree, it grows into a tree, it's for making a cradle, it's rocking a baby, it grows into a man, it lies down with me," someone said, moving the boxes around the room. He watched and listened for a while until he saw him, a little elf in a grotesque outfit. He felt for a slipper by the bed and flicked it on. -„Look how you're going to wash your hair!" He hit him in the head and the elf fell to the ground. Silvius hid under the covers and waited to see what would happen, the goblin terrified him a little. He stood up and examined the linen slippers. Then he began:-„Harden, harden, harden, I will not grind or trample, if you have given me clothes, I have served you for many years. Thrift can go, bad luck can stay, I will travel far." He finished and immediately disappeared. He was shit. Silvius stood

up and looked around the room. He also disappeared with his slipper. He heard banging on the window in the roof above his bed. Something vague was bumping into him. It looked like a giant frog. A winged giant frog with a tail. He had the wings of a bat and the tongue of a snake. -„For God's sake!" Silvius shouted and grabbed the broom as the closest thing he could do. He quickly opened the window before the monster broke it and started poking at it violently with the broom. -„You monster!" he was calling her. The next moment the door opened and the father of the family was standing in it. -„What are these wounds here? Silvius looked back, but the creature had disappeared. He took the broom out of the window and stood stiffly at the window to close it. -„So you swept our roof here, Mr. Felix, but I didn't expect that from you. That's probably some kind of custom there, isn't it?" The father of the family measured him with a strict eye. -„Well, to go to sleep," Silvius lay back in bed. Father turned off the lights and closed the door.

Silvius felt the excitement for a while longer and then finally fell asleep. In the morning, the whole family and the guest gathered again for breakfast. -„ Mr. Felix wanted to sweep our roof at night," said the father of the family. -„Well, not really," answered Silvius. -„I saw a creature there that looked like a frog but was winged and had the tongue and tail of a snake." Mother started to laugh. -„ Mr. Felix, you are already retired from those birds," she said politely that he was crazy. -„ Well, that doesn't seem right to me, Mr. Felixy. You know, I come from Welsh and there we called these creatures hlam-ig-in ee door, spelled llamhigyn y dwr, meaning water leap. But I don't believe you saw him, because it only appears there," said the father with a grave expression and serious tone. -„Isn't it possible for someone to fly here?" -„No, that is completely out of the question." -„It is more likely that a water vampire will appear in the bath - a viper from Wales, where I come from," said the mother of the family. Suddenly little

Klement came up to Silvius and handed him some book. Atu index. A page was founded in it and a house elf called Brownie, or Urisk, or Broonie, or Gruagach was depicted in it. These household spirits work at night and have poetic talents.
That explains a lot, Silvius thought.
-„If you are interested and these creatures, we can go to Loch Ness," announced the mother. -„Yes!" little Klement called out, and Klementyna joined in. Father still looked the same. They drove a jeep along Loch Ness. Silvius held on tightly to the back of the car. He was wearing a hiking hat, which he had to hold on to because of the strong wind. -„Look! You are not!" Clementine called. Little Clement had to stand to see down to the lake. Silvius peeked in too. Four Nessies, a whole family, were gathering together right outside Fort Augustus. Silvius began to feel like he was in his favorite book Jurassic Park by Michael Crichton. Nessies had long necks like sauropods, only they had two horns on their heads like snails. You could only

see that they had huge fins. However, they were closest to elasmosaurs or plesiosaurs. -„They look like when the big lake snakes swallowed the elephants and then they stayed behind," commented little Klement on the creature, and it made Silvius laugh. They continued along the coast from which you could see the other side to Foyers, where there were also more than a few and then more and more appeared until Uraquhart Bay opened up in front of them, where there was a whole flock of them and more were coming along, so they there were a dozen of them. "We will probably never see them again," said Silvius. The father looked grumpy, the mother triumphant, and Klementin and Klementýna excited. They walked to the very edge of the bay, where there was a lookout point for visitors. There were few people here. -„I was waiting for you here," the mysterious man spoke to Silvius again from the unknown. "I have something for you here," he pulled out an envelope and handed it to Silvius. He reached out for

her and a hideous clawed claw grabbed her from above. -„He must not fly away!" The mysterious stranger called and ran after her, Silvius the same. -„It's Skree! Look!" The guide called out. -„That's a phenomenon!" Silvius looked back behind the words and saw that he was the only one running after the winged beast of a woman. The mysterious man disappeared again. She flew briskly and rebelliously. Silvius stretched his arms and tried to keep up the pace even with his advanced age. But she got away from him anyway. Along the hillside and then she flew over the lake, from which a long neck with a head and sharp teeth that tore at the woman with wings, only her stump landed on the edge of the land next to the entrance to the lake, suddenly came out. She was still clutching the envelope. Silvius walked to it panting and opened it. There were plane tickets in it. -„Thanks Nessa."

Africa

This time the tickets of Silvius were taken to the state of Niger. A country that he knew very little about until then and that it was somewhere in Africa. He guessed it would be named after a river because he had some basic knowledge of leadership. The airport was full of people, but this time no one was waiting for him. He climbed out to the parking lot and looked around for taxis, but when his eyes met one waiting taxi driver, he lowered them. Where would he even go? He only got the plane tickets and that was it. No information, no clues. Nothing. The aforementioned taxi driver was already there, smiling. - Hi! Do you want to take me somewhere or are you waiting for someone?" -,,I'm not waiting. But I don't know where I want to lead. At least for now." "Then I'll take you to the city, at least you can go to the hotel there," suggested the African. "Okay," Silvius sighed and sat down. The African stepped on the gas

and they drove into town. Along the desert on a cracked concrete road. Before long they were in the center of Niamey. Paid, got out. He was in a hotel, an ordinary one, the best you would expect in the least developed country in the world. After lodging, he went out into the streets and immediately went to the restaurant next to the hotel. A man sat here with all his wives. There were five of them. They smoked hookah and listened to local rhythmic music. -„Where did you fly from?" he asked him when he noticed that he wasn't dark like the other Africans. "From Scotland," said Silvius. -„What are you doing here?" he asked. -„I am here on vacation and we are already retired," he answered. -„And what did you do? -„I was an ornithologist." -„Ah, we know that. Well, it's a pity that not fish, on the east coast of Africa they have a rare phenomenon - Latimeria. A strange sea creature with lots of fins and a jaw full of needle-sharp teeth. A whopping hundred pounds is offered for her catch. Or again on the other

side to the north-east, in the places of the upper Nile, an animal with an overgrown body appears - the gigantus catfish. Well, but when it comes to birds, go to the Sahara, there they have the most beautiful birds and even a dinosaur." -„But I'm not ashamed of dinosaurs..." Silvius stopped and thought. "What dinosaur?" he asked back. -„A giant reptile that has long limbs, can stand on its back and be as big as the tallest man," the man described him. -„And where should I start my search?" "Take the train to the east," he advised him. He did so the very next day. He arrived somewhere in the very center of the country and got off somewhere in a village. He walked around until he found the home of the mayor or village chief. -„Hi!" he greeted him. "I'm looking for some kind of reptile that stands on its back," said Silvius. -„I know what you mean. Come with me," the head of the house took him. There was a giant reptilian skull with big teeth. "Crocodile boar, kaprosuchus saharicus," he said his full name. The skull had unusually large

attacking teeth. A lot of people thought he was a mutant who grew up in the tunnels of the uranium ore mines. Others that it is only a legend. I caught him. I saw him bite the head and neck of the man right in front of me. His mouth was full, so he didn't have a chance with me." -„Great job," Silvius praised him. -„If you want to experience something, go to Kenya.
That's where the brain eater is located," the village chief told him. He left Silvius with him for the night and set off by train the next day. It was a journey of several days through several states. Chad, everything went smoothly. However, in the Central African Republic, there was a deviation in the track. They had to wait half a day before the track was repaired. Meanwhile, Silvius amused himself with a native who was riding with him in a wagon. He told him how he had flown to Africa blind and that he was supposed to follow the tracks of some predatory lizard the size of a man, only to finally see its skull and that he was now going to Kenya to find

some kind of brain eater. -„I also heard a rumor about an overgrown lizard - Čipekve, or the killer of elephants, but most of them are said to be hippopotamuses alive, because the elephants are said to have already been driven out of here. Some describe him as half elephant and half lizard. It reaches the same size as an elephant, so people keep a great distance from it. It has a long neck and elongated mouth after a reptile, and even has a smaller horn on its head. He can stand on his back and has long claws. According to some stories, they are not even afraid of rhinos. He likes to live close to water, likes to swim. Some attribute its shapes to dinosaurs, but tell me, would you look for it anywhere?" They looked around at the dense jungle around them. "Well, not at all," laughed Silvius. After a few more hours, the route was repaired and they were able to continue by train. Silvius was a little worried about South Sudan, but it turned out that African street had everything under

control. Finally, Kenya. Nakuru City. He performed here. He went looking for something to hold on to. Suddenly he heard a language he understood. He quickly went after him and tugged on his sleeve. -„Sir, good day. I am Silvius Felix. Could you just advise me please, I hear you speak the same language," Silvius began urgently. -„Well, good day, yes, sure. What are you interested in?" A young man dressed in hunting gear asked. -„Any accommodation?" -„I'll take you there to the hostels where I live too," he said and went with Silvius back to the hostels, where he helped him get settled. -„What are you even doing here? He asked him after introducing himself as Yura. -„I'm looking for some kind of brain eater here," announced Silvius. Yura liked his head with a hat. -„That's something! You probably mean Kerýt," began Yura. -„I've also heard a lot about him, I've been living here for a year now, and those stories are floating in the ether like mosquitoes. I'll tell you something, heaven sent you here. No real challenge in the time I've been

here. And you are a cryptozoologist?" "No, only an ornithologist," he answered. -„Well, it's not very close to each other," commented Yura. -„Well, how will she get married. I've been doing cryptozoology all my life in my free time," explained Silvius. -„I'm surprised you're not more interested in a kongamata or an Ethiopian death bird," continued Yura. -„I've already seen that kongamat, but I haven't been to Ethiopia yet." -„Really? Did you see him? This is not a good sign. It is said to bring death." "Well, as you can see, I'm still alive." -„And you were in the swamps of Jiund?" -„No, I saw him at my place in the jungle near my ornithological station. -„Nonsense! You must have gone crazy."-„No, really. It was red in color, with big wings and claws and that giant skeletal head with deadly teeth." -„Did he attack you? I don't see any injuries." "But please. I ran away from him." -„Well, well, anyway, you haven't seen Keryt or the Ethiopian death bird yet, so you'll have something to explore further." -„But

what's wrong with you, I'm already old, I just want to experience something again in my old age." "You'll enjoy it, don't worry. Tomorrow we'll go somewhere where they might know where the beast is. We'll buy supplies and take a few trained hunters with us." -„Okay, then," they agreed, and they really stocked up the next day. Yura picked up his acquaintances who lived in the locality and set off in all-terrain vehicles into the savannah.-„He should be found here," Yura announced when they stopped.- "We'll go further into the forest, set up camp there and set traps," he ordered. Everyone listened to him. They found a good spot in the jungle where they set up camp and various animal remains, such as fresh bones. "Now we just have to wait," said Yura by the fire.-, "That's the foot of Mount Elgon, that's exactly where it's found. It's said to be very bloodthirsty. At night, it breaks into the natives' dwellings and crushes the skulls of its sleeping victims and sucks out their brains." The men by the fire laughed.

Only Silvius was silent.-„Don't laugh too much. You have no chance against this creature alone.
He is most similar to a bear and when he stands on his back, he is up to two meters tall. It has dark long fur and a short tail. Elongated head with fangs. However, the strongest has hands with claws up to five centimeters long. He moves like a bear - clumsily. He can even scalp with his paw. And supposedly the Romans used it for matches in the circus of death with gladiators," continued Yura. -„Well, how do we catch him?" Silvius asked. -„By all available means," replied Yura, and the group of hunters around cheered. They lay by the fire for a while longer when Silvius went into the tent. He needed a nap. He woke up in the night. He had to go big. He climbed out of the tent and saw a couple of men by the fire keeping watch. -„I'm going to fuck you guys, cover my ass." The hunters laughed. He crawled behind some burdocks and began to relieve himself. What the hell is he going to wipe himself with?

He tried to feel for some burdock, but instead he felt a long fur in his hand. He turned his head towards it and out of the darkness a huge predator bared its fangs at him. Even without wiping the halves, Silvius hastily pulled up his pants and ran back to the fire with the speed of old lightning. -„Is there! Kerit! Is there!" He called out to the man and pointed to where he had climbed out. The men panicked and started firing their rifles in that direction. Yura climbed out of the tent and looked around to see what was happening. -„There is Keryt!" someone spoke up. Yura took his rifle and joined the men. Half of them stayed in the camp, the other took the hunters and went to inspect the traps and decoys. After a while they came back. -„Nothing anywhere! We had to scare him with those shots." "He almost attacked me," announced Silvius. "I even touched him," he added. -„You don't even know how lucky you are. After all, he could have killed you with one blow." Gradually they lay down again and waited for the second day. They

gave it one more night but nothing happened. They packed up the camp and headed back. Silvius said goodbye to Yura, who not only navigated him to Ethiopia but also invited him to his native country - the Czech Republic. Silvius thanked for everything and set off. Ethiopia was a wild land full of beautiful feasts for the eyes. He got off at some convenient train station and asked the residents if the Ethiopian death bird was around. They told him that there was no such bird, that it was only a scare for the children, but that it was the name of a large bat that sucked up cattle on hot nights and had previously dared to attack humans. Today, however, such cases have completely disappeared as well as its existence. However, Silvius did not worry. By reaching Ethiopia he gained direct access to the ocean and thus a voyage to Australia.

Australia

-„There are few people like you, you would be needed. Consider how big the world is and everywhere they have some such creatures, for whom the question remains whether they really still exist and wish to be revealed," the man in the hat and glasses suddenly spoke to Silvius. This made Silvius tremble again. He had to hold on to the railing. They sailed in the waves of the Indian Ocean. They kept getting bigger. It looked like something was approaching the ship. There was not a cloud in the sky. -„We are approaching the shores of Australia. A while north of here, there is an island called Rinc in the area of Indonesia, and giant nutcrackers are said to live there. Such creatures with such an excellent sense of smell that they can detect a person at a great distance and flee from him along one of the few paths they have made in the rugged terrain. Especially on such coasts as we are now approaching, only by another land. Locals call them mysterious vëy

because they are very shy. That is why they prefer night time. Colonies of these animals are said to live mainly on ants, crabs and other small food. They have no natural enemy, only man. The natives respect them and for the same reason protect them from tourists' cameras. Like you or me. We're lucky that we look the way we do and not a hairy nation of short men called Orang Pendek of red color supposedly living in Sumatra. Let's be happy, friends, that we are who we are and no one is taking pictures of us in their portfolio of catches." At that, the mysterious man with the hat and glasses disappeared and a long tentacle appeared on the deck in his place. And then another and another and another. There were about six of them and they began to wrap themselves around the hull of the ship. The sailors panicked. They thrashed and jammed their tentacles across the deck. Suddenly, the head of a giant cuttlefish also emerged. She was monstrous. -„Do something!" Silvius called to the captain. He seemed to

wake up from his lethargy. He pulled out a flare and climbed the mast where he had a good view of her head. He squeezed her after he fired and the flare splashed over her head. The cuttlefish let out one last blow and then plunged down into the ocean, where it swam away. The waves slowly subsided and the whole ship could continue sailing through the Indian Ocean to the shores of Australia. They just had to sail around the entire continent and disembark in the territory of the capital of Australia. They anchored and disembarked in the city of Melbourne. The whole crew was as happy as ever. Many of them had their families waiting there. An unknown man in a hat and glasses was waiting for Silvius, smiling. -„I hope no one suffered from seasickness, he said instead of greeting. -„How do you do it, that you always show up at the least expected moment?" Silvius asked back. -„So what are we going to look for here?" he asked further when he saw that there was no answer to the first question.-„I still owe you that giant

lizard that you had bad luck with in Africa," the mysterious man answered him.-„ Get ready for the megalania prisca monitor lizard," he added.-„Well, let it not be just one of the local tales," Silvius Felix warned him.-„Don't be afraid of disappointment, be afraid of the lizard now, so that you can he wasn't afraid you'd see him for real. Now, don't wait here for anything and come here to the hunters, they'll take you there," he led him to the man standing at the docks.
-„Good day," he greeted him and disappeared like always. He left Silvius in the lurch. "Good day," the man spoke back and turned to Silvius. -„How can I help you?" he asked politely. -„I'm looking for some monitor lizard," replied Silvius. "Komodsky?" -„No. Megalania prisca." The man was speechless. -„Listen, I don't know who you are or who you're from, but I'm not interested in any problems." -„I'm here for myself, traveling the world and looking for mysterious animals and the like." The man thought. -„Okay, I'll take you as your varan for the time

being, but you'll pay me dearly for it." Silvius had no choice but to agree. So they told a few men, took an all-terrain vehicle and a few days' supply of food. They set off to remote areas where this monitor lizard is supposed to live. He ran across their path. -,,I didn't expect this," said the hunter and stopped. He readied the rifle. The beast climbed out of the jungle, was seven meters long and weighed six hundred kilos. Even though he was four, he was taller than the two-meter hunter he had just attacked. He was a brave and very dangerous predator. The rest of the men sewed into it as much as their magazines had left. Their comrade was still pulled out from under the shot lizard, but his weapon had turned into a desolate state under the dead weight of the lizard. Together they loaded him and drove him to the city. Here they hung him on a hook in front of the pub and went to drink. "Silvius, you can sleep on my couch today," said the drunken hunter Henry from the docks after a few beers and shots. -,,Most of all, we have to leave together earlier,

otherwise the Banap people will chase us." -„Who?" -„ Banaps! These are the kind of creatures that like drunk people. They are often chased if they leave the pub in the early hours of the morning." -„Oh, and what do they look like? -„The body was like a massive calf, with a mane around the neck, four legs with three toes and two tusks from the mouth. A dog's head with a walrus' body!" "Well, let's go straight away," said Silvius. He helped Henry to his feet and he led them both to his home. "Did you hear that?" Silvius asked after hearing strange noises in the jungle. -„Yes, it's a Banap. I'm lucky, so far we can only hear them and not see them. It's early. We're leaving the pub early," Henry explained. Dropping the two of them into his abode, he fell to the floor next to the couch and immediately snored himself to sleep. Silvius lay down on the sofa and in a few minutes he was also dozing off. -„If you want, I have a type for you where to fly to next," the hunter offered to Silvius from the morning. "Golden sheep are said to have

appeared in New Zealand." -„How golden sheep? Silvius wondered. "Well, just golden sheep, it's a mystery." -„Okay, I'll head there." -„You know, I was once in Tahiti, where it is said that a spirit of the dead called Tupapau lives there," the hunter sneered at Silvius. -„What, have you met?" -„Well, I got advice over gold there, as they say. Whoever starts to run away from evil will never be able to stand up to it. And so I took it as my own and at night I purposely went out in front of the apartment to see if I could see any of the ghosts. Unfortunately, I will disappoint you. I didn't meet anyone there." "Well, at least I'll be lucky with those sheep," Silvius finally took it competitively. That evening Silvius lodged there in the capital. In the morning he left for the countryside. "I'm looking for the golden sheep," he said to a farmer. -„Yeah! You see, the neighbor over there has it," he led him to him. Merino sheep really had golden wool. -„How is it possible?" -„They supposedly get it from the leaves of the olive tree. They

are eating the whole plantation." "Mystery solved," laughed Silvius. But the route started to unfold on him again. "This is not the end," said the reappeared man with the hat and glasses. -„This time you'll take it to South America, it's a short distance from here," he handed him the tickets. -„Brazil?" Silvius wondered, but the man was already gone again.

On the plane, he noticed an interesting book by his little assistant, which coincidentally also dealt with his adoration - cryptozoology. By casually looking with a curious eye, he found inside it clues as to what he should look for in South America. He was attracted by Titanoboa cerrejonensis - a species of giant grape snake, living in the Paleocene period in the territory of present-day Colombia. Up to 15 meters. The largest snake in the world, specialized in fish, Titan strangler, bicolor, light and brown, between gray, sandy and khaki. However, according to information, the natives are supposed to see him a few times a year. Or the famous table

mountain without an entrance to it - Kurupiri. "Sir, don't you know how to get to that mountain?" he asked a local immediately after landing. He sent him to all the devils. So he will have to go there alone. He got there and pulled out a tourist guide from a compartment next to a wooden map board. The spirit of Kurupira, according to Brazilian folklore, a mystical creature, something like a demon, or a spirit or fairy of the jungle. Only it is not taken as a positive being, rather the opposite. According to legend, he has red or orange hair, glows green, and his body is the size of a smaller man, or even a dwarf. But his legs are turned backwards. He lives in the Brazilian jungle. He creates trails that lead hunters and visitors to a different time than where he was really headed. It's meant to confuse them.He can perfectly create various illusions or a sound that resembles a high-pitched whistling that haunts and drives crazy all who hear it - his victims. Someone even saw him riding a warthog. It is said to attack people

who have lost their way in the forest or hunters who kill game. So are those who cut down forests. In some areas, she appears as a seductive girl who can drain the life out of a person with just a kiss. But someone describes it differently, someone saw mastodons on that mountain. Someone describes him with the head of a bird, the body of a bloated lizard, a spiked tail, sounding upwards, an arched back with a ridge of serrated plates, looking like a dozen rooster nails lined up in a row. This is how he is described in the lost world of Arthur Conan Doyle and his professor Challanger. What else to expect in a world ruled by magic - Kandomble and Macumba. This is Brazil. The Kandomble ritual, literally translated as blood, is used to merge the supernatural and natural worlds into one to allow the jungle demon to be seen. First the sacrifice by the circular axogum and the high priest Babalorix. First, a two-legged animal such as a chicken, then a second victim consisting of a four-legged animal, such as a goat. This part of the

ceremony is performed in the morning. Certain parts of the sacrifice such as the liver, head and wings belong to the gods. The remains are prepared as food, part of which is also offered to the gods. The food is also given to the gods who are invoked during the ceremony. Cooking is in the afternoon. The rest of the food is snowed at the end of the ceremony by the participants and ordinary spectators, i.e. Silvius. Then a request for Exu, the mediator between humans and gods, to deliver a message to allow the Orishas, the lesser gods, to come to the ritual. The ceremony is performed by the singing of the oldest women. It is performed at sunset with a plate of food and a glass of water, which is then carried to the nearest crossroads. Now the next part of the ceremony begins. The gods are invoked in a certain order, but they always begin with Exu and end with the lord of the heavens, Oxal. The invocation takes place with the help of songs and dances and has the task of reviving the myths about the gods. Then the Orishas

should be present and possess their followers, this happens at the end of the chant. He also dances and sings. The distinction between the natural and supernatural worlds is erased to achieve unity. Finally, the invocation of the deities is in reverse order to send the Orishas back. The ceremony ends with a common meal of the gods, worshipers and visitors to ensure their togetherness. Macumba is divided into three divisions - Candoblé (blood), Giro (palm oil), Mesa Blanca (water). Most Orishas live in the spirit world and then incarnate as humans. Some argue that they are re-inclined people who have an above average task here. It is the so-called soul of personal destiny. After this visit, Silvius moved on to Peru.

Here he was walking along the street and just happened to see an interesting wooden statue, said to be the guardian of the night, at a traveling merchant, when the earth began to move around him. -„For God's sake! It's an earthquake!" people called

on the street. -„No, it's Minhocao!" They were misled by someone else from the crowd. The ground in the middle of the street began to rise and swell. A creature rushed out of it. If what was really a creature's head was a creature's head, then it had some kind of horns, like tentacles, maybe they were eyes on stalks like a snail. It was huge, it climbed up from the ground up to a height of about thirty meters. Its body was gray-green-brown in color and looked like the bark of centuries-old or thousand-year-old trees. Then it opened its amazing mouth filled with fangs. Silvius had no doubt that it was a head. He broke into a run, as did the entire street of people. There was chaos and shouting. He looked back to see what the creature was doing. Walls around. Then he crawled back into the hole again and disappeared. After that, Silvius decided that he would rather leave the earth and headed where his instincts led him - to the USA.

Furthermore, Silvius visited the USA while already in its southern Siamese twin. -„Hello, sir!" someone was

calling him. -„You are here as if on call," he approached him. -„What's going on?" -„We have a problem with a chupacabra, a goat vacuum cleaner, can you help me find him? -„And how?" -„We have herds of goats here, which are afraid that every night a chupacabra will come and suck one of them. I have to keep watch. And you with me. I'll let you sleep at my house for that and I'll entertain you." "Well," Silvius had no choice but to accept the offer. They waited until evening for the sun to set and guarded the herds of goats in a wooden enclosure. -„Where did you come from here?" asked the landowner. -„From South America," replied Silvius. -„You didn't stop in Mexico, did you? -„No no." -„It is a pity. They have interesting fish there - red-throated and silvery hlistoun." -„I'm a former ornithologist, I'm interested in birds, not fish." -„It is a pity." It was not even ten o'clock in the evening and they heard the goats bleating and running away. Silvius saw the creature. A small, slim, hairy, humanoid with a

thin mouth that dripped goat's blood. His eyes, black and dark as night itself, shone in the distance. A shot rang out, it was the landowner. They ran to the dead goat. The monster disappeared. Only the movement of his gray skin remained in the memory of both men. -„Well thanks, I couldn't have done it without you." He slept here until the next morning and then took it to Canada.

Canada

Silvius made his way across town. He observed everything around. Intuition told him that he could meet him here anywhere. However, he was already so hardened after all those painful journeys that he was convinced that nothing would surprise him. Still, he felt inside that he would soon run into someone or something. The feeling could be described as if he was endlessly walking inside a mirror maze, in which he was bound to come across himself. And behold, out of nowhere, a person stepped in his way. They touched closely, as if they both had enough to brake in front of each other before the expected collision. For a moment, the tension in the darkened street was broken by the radiant face of the woman who stood before him. Silvius swallowed hard. Silence. -„You are perhaps gifted to me by God himself," he cut him off. She smiled for about a second, but then frowned with her hands on her hips. He felt a sticky sensation, as if he was caught in her

pre-made web. "What are you looking at here?" The woman was taken aback by his expression at first, but in the end she looked quite amused.-„Sometimes you can meet a local species of raptor here. They're horned lizards, not much bigger than humans. They kidnap little children right out of their prams. And there's also Sasquatch - local Big Foot, some writer, descendant of dragon slayers got a life sentence for him, but that's another story." -„What did he do to him? Silvius sounded frightened. "He set traps for him." -„And did he kill him? -„Where then, Sasquatch is an immortal creature. -„Thank God." Silvius grabbed his heart and leaned against the street wall painted with some inscriptions he didn't understand. -„Could I see him?" -„He is still in those traps deep in the woods, but soon he will break free from them and be free again. Such a creature heals itself - with paramedicine." -„Well, in that case, let's go." "Don't be crazy," a lady stepped in his way. -„Believe that he is alive and well. That cures him.

When people think well of him, he is here at home. That writer is a monster." -„Which writer?" He didn't understand.-„A Czech," he got the answer.-„So a European," coincidentally, Silvius remembered the location of the statehood of this Slavic nation.

A journey across the sea

-„I hope you didn't bring some dough on board, man," joked a sailor mopping the floor nearby at Silvius, who was looking out from the deck of the steamer at the dazzled ocean. He could see the flying piranhas in the distance doing somersaults above the surface before falling back into it. It was caused by millions of dead fish floating all around the ship, which were blamed on jellyfish. It can also cause an electric shock, which can even paralyze sharks. Therefore, it is no problem for them to exterminate the small animals around them. Thanks to this balance, the voyage was smooth and none of the flying piranhas left their feast.

Japan

-„We already know you here," said someone at the airport. -„Really?

from where?" Silvius wondered. -„You've been traveling the world for some time now, haven't you? -„Yes." -„You know, everything is as it is. Everything is related to everything. The world works, it spins on its axis, and so does information. Moreover, in today's world," the Japanese man waved his hand. -„Okay, I'm looking for some legend, mythical figure or something." -„In Japan we have slightly different creatures than you have encountered so far." -„Really?" -„Yes, urban legends. For example, Hanako-san. The ghost of a girl, haunting the school girls' toilets. Children evoke it." -„Oh, and something else? I'd rather not go there, they would still think of me as God knows what." -„Don't worry about that." He went there but saw nothing. After that it dawned on him. They only see cryptozoological creatures, not urban legends. -„It is a pity."

China

He was standing on the Great Wall of China and taking in the view. Liuchen then approached him and handed him the binoculars. -„Look, there is a tiger with blue fur over there," he said and indicated the direction. -„He usually only appears in Fu-Tien province, but because of you, he traveled all the way here to see him and believe in him," he said, patting his Chinese Pinscher on the back. What Silvius would give to pet that blue tiger. He looked at him through the binoculars and noticed how his hair stood on end as if it was charged with static electricity. He then looked directly into the lenses of the telescope and his gaze met Silvius's. At that moment, Silvius flinched. Still, that special connection remained between them for that split second when they both saw each other's souls. A visit to Mongolia hadn't even occurred to him until then. That's until he happened to remember a story about a legendary creature called Olgojkhorchoi, which supposedly

inhabits the Gobi Desert, which stretches between the Russian and Mongolian Chinese borders, when he was flying over them.
EuropeParisThis world-famous city, built on the foundations of human remains from plague epidemics, was one of the most important places in the world, mainly because of its history. The Frankish Empire was the foundation of all of Europe. The Louvre with the Mona Lisa was located here. Mary Magdalene was buried here. The clouds were dominated by the illuminated structure of the Eiffel Tower. The French Revolution took place here, which led to determining the direction of the entire modern history. And he could go on like this. However, according to preserved information, there was a special cabaret full of super natural creatures. This panopticon was named after the animal that was its mascot - Tapirus. In front of the entrance stood a tethered horse, dressed in a greave, that is, a decorative covering for the horse's head. -„Tapirus indicus," said out of

nowhere a man with a bowler hat in a suit with a mustache and a gentleman's cane from behind the expensive curtain in the door. He tapped her above him. The animal's skull hung over the doorway. -„Cábrak's tapir," Silvius confessed. -„Try to guess what my horse's hooves are made of," he twirled his bow tie under Silvius's neck. He started looking at them. It was black and white. She looked stitched together and the material. -„Don't tell me it's made of leather...," he couldn't finish. -„Yippee! You are bright! Go inside. Your eye will surely not miss any detail. I wish you a pleasant spectacle," he finished behind Felix's back, who suddenly stepped inside. Here he suddenly saw the largest predator on the planet hanging from the top of the ceiling, tied with hemp ropes. Sperm whale twenty meters long. Of course he wasn't alive. Such an individual can weigh up to sixty tons. This one was, as Silvius immediately convinced himself, dissected. With a big scar stitched all over his stomach. Such a one would be

able to organize a krakatika in an epic duel in the depths of the sea. But he wasn't the only one here. Other animals were displayed on their bases along the walls. Lion, polar and forest bear, tiger. He stopped there. He had impressive teeth. Thirty teeth throughout the mouth - one large curved canine, three small incisors, three molars on the upper jaw and two lower and a large molar at the very back. What was interesting was that each of these teeth has a different use. It is a typical feature of all felines, as well as using their tongue instead of cutlery when feeding. Each of the predators, whether dog-like, bear-like, bear-like, marten-like, civet-like or cat-like, fed in a different way. Silvius had always been fascinated by this. It suddenly dawned on him that sometimes in restaurants, or simply at dinner, he looks around and observes what type of animal he would assign others to based on the way they are fed. Then, however, he saw the last two pieces on display here in the Obludarium. Killer

whale and shark. At that moment, he was slightly chased away by a life-sized shark with a double row of teeth exposed. He wondered what kind of animal could have the right defense against this man-eater. Shell? Stings or spines? Poison or chemicals? A mix of spines and poisons? Or simply just the senses, speed and colouring? He couldn't decide. Man would solve it in his own way - he would make weapons. However, even some animals can use various objects from the surroundings. Such an otter can crack a mollusk against a stone. Vulture can throw it again. On the other hand, such a squirter spits water at its prey. When he remembered all the creatures he had seen, he slowly felt like he was in Pokemon. None the less, it was time to go deeper into the Obludarium, which so far looked like a museum. He reached for the curtain and, after opening it a little, stepped behind it. He found himself in a kind of arena. It was located at the top of one of the sides of the sofa sets arranged in a circle as if in cascades. Most of the places were

quite occupied and right down in the middle... There was something hanging that he had never seen in his life and never expected to see. -„Look at the Melusina!" A man standing next to her with a wooden pointer shouted. She was skinned and dissected. Then covered with resin. A kind of lizard woman resembling a sea serpent.Instead of lungs, it had gills, under which the heart was hidden, and from it glands stretched to its long scaly part, where the stomach was located, and after it, along the intestines, the ovaries. That was the end of the tail. Her female body and head were posthumously frozen with an icy calm expression. The whole thing was suspended on several simple metal pedestals with wheels, which the assistant now maneuvered and gradually took them all away again. Another exhibit took its place. This time it was a smaller but no less interesting piece. They were the proportions of a fit man with a peculiarly excessive head and body

hair. Silvius had to walk closer to it and sit down. It was only now that he saw something that made the hairs on his back stand on end. He was full grown. It really had a round head with hairy tentacles and two giant eyeballs with lots of hexagon particles inside those eyes. Beneath them rose his suction apparatus. One arm was covered with the same pubic hair as the rest of the body below it. His palm unnaturally shrank to a complete fly stump. The body, like its predecessors, was uncovered for research and covered in resin. The man with the top hat and index finger chattered again, pointing to organs that were a mixture of flies and humans. After that, the fly man exhibit was taken away again. In its place, something that was finally alive appeared on the scene. But unnameable. A four-legged creature with a body covering of no known origin. The original white, almost rubbery tissue from the look of it, with deep red small short spines protruding from it. It was almost unrecognizable where his eyes and muzzle were, how he was

covered by his skin. He didn't look dangerous, rather stubborn. One large claw on each of its forelimbs indicated that it was probably an omnivore, but only big enough to eat a cat, dog, or rabbit. After she was taken away, another specimen appeared in her place. This time it was a lycanthrope. He still had the remnants of a torn green shirt hanging on him, so typical of the settlers of the woodlands where these transmutations usually take place. His body went through incredible pains during bone growth that older individuals are not prepared for. In the same way, nails and hair bristled and strengthened. Not to mention the change in the appearance of his head as it transmuted from a human skull to a predominantly wolf one. including teeth and ears. After he was taken away, a real living phenomenon appeared before the eyes of everyone present. A white four-legged body completely similar to a goat except for one detail - a horn sticking up from the head. -„Well, hold it for me, unicorn!" someone shouted

from the visor. He really seemed that way until he noticed. "This is no unicorn, just a goat with a horn," someone protested. -„Don't be fooled. The horn is fused to the creature's skull for good," said the usher, tapping the spiraling unicorn horn with his index finger. Then they took him away again. Now it was the turn of two exhibitions. Female and male gender. Sirens this time. As it should be, also dissected and sprayed. Their bodies from head to waist were human and natural, except for that detail - the gills. Their glands extended into the ribcage where the creature's lungs were located. The rest of the interior was run-of-the-mill with human. From the waist down, however, there were scales that covered and protected the fatty meat, which was the same color as, for example, tuna. After it came the final number of the evening program in the Paris panopticon. It was a living creature on a long, narrow leash in the size of a small dog, such as a Bichon. But this was a wild hare at first glance. But the antlers of a twelve-

year-old were sticking out between his long ears. It made the crowd laugh. At that moment, however, his long wings unfurled. The crowd fell silent again and she listened to the gentleman in the bowler hat with the pointer. -,,Mammiferes Paraleporides," he introduced a creature whose wings began to flutter. The crowd watched them. It was feathered like a duck or a goose or a swan, but it could lift the mammal up to the maximum height above the audience, as far as the long-rope sleds would allow. He kicked his feet like a madman and when he gave up, the wings carried him back down to the audience. Some visitors even stood up and cheered how much they enjoyed the thrilling and sometimes terrifying show. After that, they all went outside. Out on the road. Silvius purposefully realized that he was exactly what the French call a flaneur. This is a person who walks through the city determined to experience it first hand. No guides or maps. He was guided only by his senses and memory. Luckily, she didn't make

him angry, unlike the shaking, and he roughly knew where to head to the hotel when it came to that.Czechia
He had never seen narrow streets in a distinctive medieval or even Gothic style anywhere else. As if he suddenly found himself in the middle of the 10th century. And lo! Tavern. He guided his body to the smell of hops. He didn't even have to say half a word to Hospodský and he already got one topped with a foam cap in front of his belly button apron. It was bitter and the foam made a small mustache under his nose, which he wiped off with his sleeve. He went out into the street, where other brewers were also standing by the wooden window sills and chatting with passers-by or looking around the city. Here, Silvius had the feeling that the ancient Celtic city itself, inhabited since ancient times and not only by Turks and Germans, was exactly what he longed to see. Here the atmosphere was steeped in mystery. And behold, he saw a person who, for a completely unknown reason, seemed familiar to

him, despite the fact that he had never seen her. She radiated what an animal in the jungle would radiate. A predator on the hunt for food. His mere gait - precise and rhythmic, yet light and relaxed, as if he were dancing with each step. -„Sir!" He couldn't resist addressing him. "My name is Silvius and I come from a long way away," he said. The young man stopped and pushed his sunglasses closer to his forehead. -„Domynick," he also gave him his hand and squeezed it firmly with his thumb. -„Where are you from?" The young man struck up a conversation with him. -„From around the world. For a long time now I have only been traveling the world and trying to get as many experiences as possible with special beings." -„Then put me on there as well." The young man confirmed with a toothy smile. This made Silvius laugh. -„I am a writer, I can listen to your story and write it down." This surprised him greatly. -„Good and... maybe I heard about you. Weren't you in Canada some time ago?" -„Yeah. I was there in prison." "Did

they pardon you?" -„No. I ran away." Silvius smiled incomprehendingly. He once read somewhere that it's hard to believe writers what they actually tell. -„It's enough if you invite me for a beer," explained the person who introduced herself to him as Domynick. That's how they stood of one wooden outdoor windowsill in a back alley in Prague until the shutter.-„ And I advise you to go to Japan for urban legends, there are countless of them there. You'll be lucky to find them, boy, I can tell by looking at them." -„Urban legends?" -„Well of course, for example Mumi - a fox with 9 tails, lives for thousands of years. You can see a lot of them there," After finishing the last glass of draft beer, Silvius Felix said goodbye to the bachelor and headed to his hotel suite. Here he woke up in the morning with a strange hungover. She told him to take it to just one final resting place, and that was the Caribbean.

Bermuda

-„You know that I myself don't know why I finally chose Bermuda as my final resting place." -„However, I know it exactly, there are a lot of boring beaches and there you will see the most legendary and mysterious creatures. For the likes of you Silvius, this is not Bermuda but Bernuda. Everyone has heard the hackneyed story about the Bermuda Triangle, and I think you Felix will be the ones to come up with it." -„You have wit, that must be left to you. And will you finally at least tell me who you are?" -„I'm an anesthesiologist." -„Well, hold it for me. And where do you think I should start looking for the Bermuda Triangle? I feel that this case has already been clarified by the magnetic field." -„You know, it seems to me that the triangular lower part of the swimsuit of the lady over there has the strongest magnetic field." -„But what you don't have are bikinis. Bermuda shorts are men's dress shorts after all." -„You like to trample on your

luck, Silvius. You run from your own wife, and if only for a younger one, but you'd rather run after monsters, right?" -„Don't talk about them like that! They are magical creatures, so it is necessary to reproduce and confirm their existence." -„Of course yes, but I would rather trust you that you will enjoy yourself once more after that long and dangerous journey." -„But what doesn't have you, it doesn't even work for me anymore as it should." -„Don't worry Silvius. Throw away all fears and dare. The girls will know how to deal with you," and before you know it the young man disappeared again and instead of him Silvius was surrounded by a group of girls around his deckchair. She took off the top of her two-piece swimsuit all at the same moment.

A HEAVY LEATHER BOOT LEANED AGAINST A ROCK. IT BELONGED TO SOMEONE WHO HAD BEEN WALKING LIKE THIS IN TRACKING SHOES FOR QUITE SOME TIME. NOW THEIR TIP WAS POINTING TOWARDS THE SURFACE OF THE SEA THAT SPREAD OUT BELOW THE CLIFF. IT WAS A SUNNY AFTERNOON AND THE VISIBILITY WAS SO FAVORABLE THAT THE SHORES OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT COULD BE SEEN. MORE SPECIFICALLY, MOROCCO. THOSE HEAVY BOOTS THAT JUST UNTIED THEIR LACES WERE SOMEWHERE IN THE AREA OF GIBRALTAR, THE BRITISH ENCLAVE OF SPAIN. AFTER THAT, THE PERSON JUMPED INTO THE WATER AND SOMEONE CALLED OUT TO

HIM:-,,KLITOS! HOW IS SHE?" -,,REFRESHING, COME JOIN IN," HE CALLED BACK TO OTHERS WHO SHARED THE SO-CALLED DIRTBAG LIFESTYLE WITH HIM. TRANSLATED FROM ENGLISH AS DIRTY BACKPACK, BUT IT ACTUALLY MEANT MUCH MORE THAN THAT. SUCH KILOMETERS WALKED AND MOUNTAINS CLIMBED. OTHERS JOINED HIM FOR REFRESHMENTS. ONLY THEN DID JEN, THE LEADER OF THIS GROUP, NOTICE THAT THERE WAS A HUGE CAVE RIGHT UNDER THE ROCK WHERE HE HAD TRIUMPHANTLY PLACED HIS FOOT. HE HAD HEARD A LOT ABOUT GIBRALTAR'S CAVES, BUT HE HAD NEVER BEEN TO ONE IN HIS LIFE. AND SO HE MELTED TOWARDS HER. -,, KLITOS! WHERE ARE YOU SWIMMING?" A WOMAN'S VOICE RANG OUT FROM THE TOP OF THE CLIFF WHERE THE MULTI-LEAVED

BREADFRUIT, OR JACKFRUIT, WAS GROWING. NORMALLY IT COULDN'T GROW IN THIS REGION, BUT DESPITE THAT, THEY WERE HERE. SHE WAS JUST CHECKING HER COMPASS. A SIMPLE DEVICE FOR ORIENTATION AND NAVIGATION IN THE FIELD. SHE HAD A DEVIATION OF 60 DEGREES, SEXTILE. IT IMMEDIATELY DAWNED ON HER THAT THEY MUST BE STANDING ON A MAGNETIC FIELD. SHE LOOKED DOWN INTO THE WATER, BUT KLITOS WAS ALREADY ELSEWHERE. HE WAS INSIDE THE CAVE, GOING DEEPER AND DEEPER. THE ONLY THING HE HAD WITH HIM WAS A FLASHLIGHT. HE SUSPECTED THAT THE PASSAGES INSIDE WERE QUITE CONVOLUTED. THE COMPLEXITY OF THESE CAVES WAS USUAL FOR THEM. FINALLY HE STEPPED ONTO THE LEDGE ABOVE THE VAST CAVERN AND LOOKED DOWN WHERE THE FIRE CRACKLED AND BLAZED. SOMETHING

incredible. Figures stood around him. A pack of humanoids with overgrown light lanugo hair. He quickly extinguished his flashlight and watched them breathlessly. Even from a distance, he was able to assign them to the phenomenon of intels, that is, men who are unable to establish a sexual or romantic relationship. No wonder, no woman in sight. He could best compare them to a group of Neanderthals, which survived here for centuries or millennia and gradually mutated. The change in genotype was clear at first sight. Yet their origin was entropic - unclear. Their genesis, their origin, had to be plastically flattened in every respect so that they could survive here. As the theory of frozen evolution claims, only

THE EXCEPTIONAL SPECIES REPRODUCE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR LINEAGE AND THOSE THAT ARE IN EXCESS ARE LEFT TO FATE. AS LIFE GOES. HERE TOO HE SAW THE ALPHA MALE, A STRONG AND MATURE AUTHORITARIAN, GNAWING ON A LARGE, MASSIVE BONE. IT TEARS THE FLESH FROM WHAT IS PROBABLY A FEMUR WITH ITS REMAINING TEETH. THE OTHERS WERE ALSO NIBBLING ON SOMETHING. HE SAW THE BETA MALE, SUBMISSIVE, FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL, STRUGGLING WITH RIBS. RIGHT NEXT TO HIM HE RECOGNIZED AN OMEGA MAN. FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF AN INTELLIGENT AND SENSITIVE PERSON WHO DOES NOT WANT TO LEAVE THE CONFORMAL ZONE NEAR THE FIRE. HE ALSO PICKED BONES. A LITTLE FURTHER AWAY, A GAMMA MAN, THE PROUD KEEPER OF THE FIRE, HAD A THICK BRANCH AS HIS ONLY FOOD, AND

POKED AT THE COALS WITH IT. THE LAST TWO STOOD A LITTLE FURTHER ON. KLITOS RECOGNIZED THEM. THE ONE STARING INTO THE FIRE FROM A DISTANCE WITH A DULL EXPRESSION OF INSTRUCTIVE AND LISTENING MUST HAVE BEEN A DELTA MALE. HIS HANDS WERE BLOODY. THE LAST OF THEM, WITH HIS BACK TURNED AND DOING SOMETHING IN THE SHADOWS, HAD THE NATURAL ATTRIBUTES OF A SIGMA MAN - HE HAD THE ATTRIBUTES OF EVERYONE. HE THEN TURNED TO SEE KLITOS CLUTCHING IN HIS HANDS A FRESHLY SEVERED HEAD OF A FEMALE, WHICH MUST ALSO HAVE BEEN MUTATED FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF THEIR HUMANOID SUBSPECIES. SO THAT WAS WHAT THE WHOLE GANG WAS ENJOYING - THEIR MATE. KLITOS'S STOMACH TURNED UPSIDE DOWN AND HIS HEAD REELED. HE HAD TO BRACE HIMSELF WITH ONE HAND AND HELD IT OUT INTO THE VOID OF

DARKNESS AROUND HIM. HE BUMPED INTO A FRAGMENT OF ROCK AND IT ROLLED AWAY WITH A TERRIFYINGLY NOISY RESONANCE. THIS CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF THE CANNIBALISTIC GANG BELOW HIM. THEY ALL RAISED THEIR HEADS AND THEIR GAZES TO WHERE THE SOUND OF THE FALLING ROCK WAS COMING FROM. THEY THREW THEIR FOOD WHEREVER THEY SAW FIT. LIKEWISE, THE HEAD HELD BY THE SIGMA MAN ENDED UP LIKE THE REST OF THE REMAINS THROWN SOMEWHERE NEAR THE FIRE. PICKING UP THEIR MACHINED STONE IMPLEMENTS, THEY SET OFF TO INVESTIGATE WHO WAS OCCUPYING THEIR CAVE. KLITOS WALKED BACK OUT OF THE CAVE IN UTTER TERROR. ALL THE SAINTS STOOD BY HIM, FOR HE REMEMBERED THE WAY. -,,CALL THE ARMY! CALL THEM! LET THEM DROP NAPALM HERE! LET THEM COME WITH BAZOOKAS!" HE REMEMBERED

A GASOLINE-FUELED MILITARY WEAPON AND ANTI-MISSILE MISSILES. -,,WHAT'S GOING ON KLITOS?" THEY ASKED HIM. IT WASN'T UNTIL THEY WERE AT LEAST A KILOMETER AWAY FROM THAT PLACE THAT HE COULDN'T TALK ABOUT THE WHOLE SITUATION WITH CALMNESS AND RATIONAL THOUGHT.

The year was 1692, and on the east coast of North America, in the state of Massachusetts, in the city of Salem, located on one of the spurs into the North Atlantic Ocean, which was made up mainly of European immigrants, something terrible happened in the family of a reverend, his daughter, nine aged Elizabeth Paris, had a sort of seizure. Out of nowhere, she fell to the ground and began to jerk herself in all directions. Her limbs twisted in boundless chaos. Reverend Sam Paris couldn't believe his eyes. He grabbed her by one arm, then the other, and pulled her to his feet. He called for help from God and their servant. Elizabeth continued to wriggle her limbs and head for a while until she finally relaxed and the seizure stopped. She urinated herself. The servant immediately sent for the doctor, while the Reverend cleaned his daughter, changed her clothes and carried her to bed. -„What do you think it could be?" He asked after the doctor and the rest of the Reverend's family had come and told them everything in detail. -„ Well. It doesn't look like any of today's common diseases. It looked more like a fit of severe hysteria. May I ask about her

mother?" -„She died in childbirth." -„And her behavior?" -„She was always well-behaved." -„Well, that could mean only one possibility - hyperglycemia." -„What does that mean, doctor? -„Problems with sugar level. -„Diabetes?" The reverend was horrified. -„It is quite possible. I'll try to get some insulin." Suddenly they were disturbed by a shout from the great room. They both ran there at once. The reverend's niece, eleven-year-old Abigail Williams was now lying on the ground with the same symptoms as Elizabeth before. The doctor immediately tilted her head and pulled her tongue out of her mouth to prevent her from suffocating. -„This looks more like epilepsy." "My daughter also had a seizure," said the reverend. -„That both girls suffer from epilepsy? Well, it is possible." -„One couldn't catch it from the other, this disease is not contagious." -„We would still be missing that," testified the reverend's distraught sister. -„Then how could they both get the same disease? -„It could be a matter of heredity. Did you have someone in your family with diabetes or epilepsy?" -„We don't know about anything like that," confirmed both siblings, one of whom was Reverend Sam.

-„That would mean that the disease is only of psychological origin. Girls, tell us about the attacks." -„I don't remember anything from him, I only know that my head got confused out of nowhere and then just darkness." -„I saw something when I was outside," said Elizabeth. -„What was that Elizabeth? Tell my child," continued the

reverend. -„I saw the figure of a girl in a hood in the forest. She had ... white hair ... and eyes." The people in the room were startled when they heard this. -„She saw a witch!" The maid of the reverend's house called out. -„Nonsense! Here in Salem?" -„Thank God we are no longer in Europe for witches to appear here." -„Remember, we all come from Europe here. We could have brought witchcraft here." -„ But with whom? Who would be such an abominable associate of the devil to indulge in witchcraft here in America, the land blessed by God." -„That's exactly it. Where else but here could there be a battle between good and evil. Moreover, at a more convenient time than after a long, grueling winter." -„I can't listen to this anymore," said the reverend and went out for a walk in the city. Everywhere there was melting snow and misery in the form of scabies and unwelcome eroticism, skin mycosis on the legs that could make a real mess. If the witches really gained power over the city for the destruction of the church and harm to the local population. God gave Samuel's message through his daughter and niece. Only if the witches didn't do it themselves. But why? Everything will come to the surface one day and this would only reveal themselves. Perhaps for the purpose of confirming one's own existence, but this would also mean the omnipresent existence of God. But here we are not in Europe. Here, witches can start a new life just like any respectable citizen. -„ Reverend Sam! Reverend Sam!" A familiar voice called out to him from

afar.-„The girls have run amok again!" The echo overtook him and his head ached. He had to hurry home. "For Christ's sake, someone cursed the girls!" -„You have to tell us if you see anything again." -„I saw a woman with raven hair. She was having fun with that girl in the forest. And there was also someone else standing there. She was about as old as Aunt Evelyn. She was standing not far away, spying on them. There were strange totems hanging around and figures made of twigs tied together. " "Good Elizabeth, we're going to investigate right away. You two stay in bed." The Reverend went into town, knowing who to look for.

He walked through streets plagued by an epidemic of scabies and mildew. There was decay in the air. The gray gloomy weather after the winter season settled down to a feeling of dampness and coldness, which stung him to the very core of his bones. He was looking for black raven hair. He looked out for them in the crowds and peeked around the outskirts of the streets. Despite the fact that most of the inhabitants wore hoods and caps during this period. And suddenly, while rounding a corner, he accidentally bumped his chest into a cloaked figure like most of the surroundings. The hood lifted and he peered into a swarthy and slightly startled face. Her black hair fell to her forehead and the rest was tied back in a bun. She was exactly what he was looking for. At least he suspected. God had sent her his way, but Reverend Sam had forgotten in his ecstasy that he should speak to her.

He merely apologized politely and continued on his way. But he turned around for the last time and saw him carrying a small twig in his hand. Probably from the woods, across town. He remembered what his daughter was talking about. About twigs tied together in some kind of shots or signs. But these kinds of taunts were quite common all over the city. The same goes for the Indians, who, even from a small proportion of the entire area, still made up a large number of them. He wasn't sure if she was really the one he was looking for. So he continued on his way until he passed most of the parts of the city where he no longer lived. He managed to see a lot. Many Indian minorities, yet none of them had made such an impression on him as the Indian woman he accidentally bumped into. It was after Sunday Mass and Reverend Samuel headed home, anxious about what could happen to his daughter Elizabeth again. So many bruised hours to nurse his daughter back to health, but the situation was still the same. "Mr. Reverend," a lady stopped him by addressing him in front of the church. -,,I heard about the strange things happening in your household." -,,Really?" The reverend was horrified. He knew very well what consequences this could have on his position not only in society, but also in the church area. -,,One woman in my neighborhood deals with healing, so I thought I could help you. Her name is Sarah Goode. Visit her. Seek her help, for the good of all. God bless you Reverend Sam." -,,He thanked and humbly headed home at last. -,,How are you feeling Elizabeth?"

"She hasn't had an attack for two days," the maid remarked. The girl had circles under her eyes and was pale all over. She didn't eat much. She lost her appetite. She just lay listlessly in bed. -,,And what does the niece have? Do you know anything about her?" -,, She allegedly had a seizure last night. It gave your sister quite a scare, but it finally went away again after a few minutes. -,,And did she have any visions? -,,You would have to ask her that, Reverend." -,,Good. Thank you for your concern." -,,You're welcome. In these difficult times, people need to help each other and be close to each other. Especially in your household, where Elizabeth lacks the feminine element of a mother." -,,Oh yes," sighed the reverend, remembering his late wife. "I'll have to go into town again," Sam informed his maid. "Sure, Reverend, and where are you headed?" -,,It is possible that one person in question has a cure for this curse that has afflicted my beloved daughter and niece." -,,May I know the name of the person in question?" The maid asked. -,,Sarah Goode." -,,Yes, I know who you mean, he deals in herbalism and ointments. I will write you her address."

He knocked on the door of the house and it opened after a while. In them stood the figure of a woman of the same age as the reverend himself. -,,Come on father," she addressed him and created a place for him to enter the house. -,,What brought you here? She asked him as she led him further into her quarters. -,,My poor daughter and niece are afflicted with a hideous disease or curse. They

fell into the clutches of witch powers to harm me." The woman stared at him in astonishment. "Then I'm not sure if you're right," she replied. "Your name is Sarah Goode, isn't it?" -,,Why do you want to know it?" -,,A woman at church gave me a tip that you know how to deal with these misfortunes."-,,I don't know if I'm really the one you're looking for, but yes, my name is Sarah Goode." -,,I'm asking for any advice or help," urged the reverend.-,,Okay," she agreed finally.-,,But I can't promise you that I'll help you. I'll only do what I can. Of course, not for free. That I would get my revenge." The reverend nodded. -,,I deal with herbalism and ointment, that's all. Tell me more about what ails your household." -,,As I have already mentioned, my daughter and niece have repeatedly had a strange seizure in which they cannot control their body or mind. They shake and have visions, so at least my daughter has them."
-,,Visions?" Sarah wondered. -,,They see different people, places or objects during the seizures. -,,So he has certain visions." -,,Yes." -,,And what did they see? She asked as she rummaged through her ointments and jars of herbs. -,,She saw the white eyes of a young girl their age and then the raven hair of an Indian woman. Some place in the woods full of strange stick totems hanging around." -,,Interesting," Sarah stopped. -,,And the girl she saw, what kind of hair did she have? -,,White too." -,,Okay, that's enough for me. Here, apply this ointment to the girls on their limbs. Ankle, wrist and neck area. In no case

do not apply it to the temples, forehead or any other part of the head. Not even on the face! You would anoint them with that and everything could go wrong." -,,Thank you very much!" -,,Come and tell me in a week how you are doing with the situation. Alternatively, bring money as well." The reverend nodded and started home again. He was walking down the street when he saw a person he knew. He had seen the same fur robe before. And he wasn't the only one there. He had the same fur coat next to him, which was carried by a slightly larger figure. From the way they walked, he figured they were both women. They were heading to the marketplace. Only then could he get a better look under their hoods. Indeed, one of them was the Indian woman he had accidentally bumped into recently. And the other one. A woman with European features. Dark, almost the same hair as her mate. She seemed domineering and had a very white complexion. He approached. He spoke to the Indian. She gave him an embarrassed look. -,,Please, what happened?" The woman next to her asked. -,,I only bumped into it by accident, while walking around town, about a week ago." The woman pursed her lips at him. "Sarah Osborn," she introduced herself. -,,And this is my servant Tituba." -,,I haven't seen you in church yet." -,,We are not from your part of town." -,,Sure, I understand." -,,Do you have another wish?" -,,No thanks, I wish you the best of luck." He went home again. There he put ointment on his daughter for the night as Sarah had advised him. For the remaining five days

there was no attack. The longest time without symptoms. It was not until the fifth day that he was late in the church and then he came home and heard a scream. He ran to his daughter's room. The maid held her tight so she wouldn't twitch so much. -„Again!" She was calling. He helped her until she stopped, but this time it took two hours. The longest of all the attacks. -„Servant, did you put the ointment on her face?" -„Yes." -„You can't do that! Didn't I tell you not to touch that ointment at all!?" -„It's all witchcraft and you believe it! Sarah Goode! Down with her!" The maid slammed the door and went out. The Reverend stayed at home and watched over his daughter. He rubbed her properly with ointment and she seemed to be all right again. The maid did not come again the next day, so he put the daughter in the care of his sister and told her how she was doing. apply the ointment to his niece as well. He went himself to Sarah Goode's. She was not at home. So he walked up the street a block away. He heard a commotion. He went that way. There was a commotion at one of the houses. He saw the soldiers arresting some people. He knew them. When he got closer, he saw the Indian woman and the woman he had met a few days ago. -„Where are you taking them and why?" -„To the locker room and then to court." -„They are witches! To the border with them!" Called the crowd gathered around. A crow on the tree croaked.

The trial has begun. The usher, William Stoughton, in his expensive suit and golden short hair, surveyed the

defendants. Sarah Goode was already there too. They had to take her away before the reverend even got to her. Then Sarah Osborn and her Indian maid Tituba. -„The first witness, please," the judge summoned. An emaciated man, not very well dressed, came to the front of the hall. -„Speak," ordered the judge. -„I saw that woman, that Indian woman, talking to herself or something in the forest. Surely with Satan himself! She also collected twigs and made strange ornaments from them, which she hung around the place," after which the witness was speechless. -„That's all?" "Yes, judge." -„Okay, sit down. So I am asking that woman, the Indian Tituba, to appear before the court." She came forward. She had anger on her face. -„I didn't talk to myself there, nor to Satan. For that with Holilakhaii." -„What or who is it? -„Indian spirits. Every place, time and object has such a spirit." -„And what does such a spirit look like? -„This was the spirit of the times. A very young girl, still a child, with white hair and irises. She advised me to be patient, that my husband would show up soon and she would tell me where if I would teach her how to make Indian totems. These are the ornaments I hung on the trees around." "Are you a virgin?" The council and all the staff were horrified by such a daring question. -„Yes, she answered. -„Witch!" A shout came from the crowd. -„Do you then publicly admit that you are a witch?' -„ Shaman! And I'm not the only witch here! What's up Bridget Bishop! And this and that!" She pointed towards the crowd in the courtroom.

-,,Calm in the courtroom!" He called the court to the commotion caused. -,,Titubo, you can go sit down. I summon your landlady, Sarah Osborne, and the witness who accused her."-,,I saw her conversing with a crow, or raven. A clear sign and personification of Satan. I have also heard from the neighborhood that she has a collection of very dangerous and unchristian books ." -,,That's all?" The judge asked, and after the witness had confirmed, he fixed his gaze on Sarah Osborn.-,,In Europe, crows are a symbol of war and death, loneliness, evil and bad luck. I asked her when the period of smallpox and mildew will finally end ." The judge grasped his chin.-,,I suppose that a woman as educated as you, Sarah Osborn, is aware of the seriousness of the charges. I suppose you know this from the books the witness was talking about. Is that right?" -,,Yes it is." -,,And what did the bird reveal to you?
-,,That the period will end very soon. This summer." -,,Witch! He's lying!" Someone called again from the hall. -,,Silence!" The judge got angry. -,,Do you hereby confess to witchcraft?" -,, Yes," Sarah Osborn stood in front of the court in a firm and self-confident stance. -,,Good! Go sit down. I now demand Sarah Goode and the witness who accused her." Reverend Sam's former maid came forward. -,,They're making witches' salves and even Reverend Sam himself has jumped on the bandwagon!" She screamed out loud, throwing the whole room into an uproar." -,,For God's sake!" Someone shouted from the crowd. The reverend stood up. -,,My daughter and niece were plagued

by strange attacks, allegedly caused by the girl Tituba was talking about. "Did your daughter see her too?" -„Yes. She had visions during the seizures." -„And isn't she also a witch? -„Well, may I? The daughter of a reverend and a witch?" Someone in the crowd stood up for the reverend. The judge laughed. He didn't like something about the reverend. -„And you, Mrs. Goode, have you seen the girl with the white eyes and hair?" -„Yes, I had fun with her several times in the forest when I was under a full moon for herbs for an ointment." -„And what did she tell you? -„We talked about types of witchcraft, for example, I introduced her to what I do, i.e. Wicca. It may be neo-paganism, but it is modern and I believe it will have a future for witchcraft. It is based on pre-Christian, Celtic, ancient and Germanic traditions. These are essentially ceremonies." -„Do you thereby confess to witchcraft?' -„Sure." -„Okay, go sit down. Today, other names of people accused of witchcraft were heard here. I will judge you tomorrow," announced the judge and then left the room.

-„We have to get away from Salem," suggested Tituba.

-„Yes unfortunately. One would not believe that they would persecute us like this here too. In Europe, the order of the Knights of Malta followed us. That Greek cross of theirs always embarrassed me. They burned us straight away there, at least here it is resolved by the courts. For they had their handle to destroy evil - malleus maleficarum." -„Let's pack what we can and leave.

The girl told me that my husband was waiting for me in Ontario." -„Great Titubo," said Sarah Osborn and locked the door of the house behind her with a key so that no one would disturb them while they were packing.
-„What about your daughter, Reverend?" Sarah Goode asked. -„Paradoxically, your ointment helped her." -„Great. Well, it's time for me to move out." "Wait. I like you. I haven't had a chance to meet someone like you since Elizabeth's mother died." "Reverend. It is not safe for me here." -„Fine. I'll help you move out. And actually, now that the whole town knows that I came to you for advice and not from God, I won't be respected here as a reverend anymore. I have to go too. Let's move out together Sarah ," Sam suggested and Sarah smiled at him.
The court reconvened the next day. William summoned Bridget Bishop as another accused of witchcraft. -„You are known for your dubious reputation, you often go to the tavern and you dress very conspicuously. -„What kind of puritan called me this way? -„Your ex-husband." -„Which one do you mean?" -„The third one." "Oh..." she sighed. -„Do you hereby confess to witchcraft?" -„No!" -„Allright then. I have another hundred and fifty names on the list. Which means we don't have time. They hereby sentence you to be hanged on a noose!" He took the hammer and slammed it on the table. -„No!" Bridget called out, but the soldiers were already dragging her away. -„Then another lady, or now even a gentleman shaving! Giles Corey." The defendant came forward. "Do you

publicly confess to witchcraft?" -„No! I am completely innocent." The judge looked at him. -„But you have a hard core. I hereby sentence you to death by crushing!" The judge slammed his gavel on the table. The men led him away. In this way, he sent another 18 people to God's judgment, the ordeal - a test by fire or water. Some ended up on the gallows, others burned or drowned. After a while, however, word spread that all those who died in such a tragic way were innocent. None of them confessed to witchcraft and there wasn't even enough evidence to convict them. Unlike those who confessed to witchcraft and who disappeared from the city out of nowhere. Judge Williem left behind only a letter of apology in which he admits that he committed a fanatical interpretation of the law and sent many innocent townspeople to a cruel death. At the same time, someone did not even notice the important detail that one of his eyes was whitish gray and the other was as dark as the bottom of a well. The girl whom the witches saw in the forest was also not seen by anyone else. It wasn't until a few centuries later that a much older one, roughly in his teens, was seen in the area southwest of Salem. This place is called Blair.

Mohamed was hidden in the shadows of his ground floor apartment. He was looking out at the full moon, which was obscured by clouds up to the modest shelter. It was night outside on the street. Feral cats hunted rats and birds, which classically tried to feed on food scraps among the garbage. Wildcats are always on the lookout for the right opportunity to attack them. Most of the time, they almost always caught their victims by surprise and got them. Feeding time means something different to everyone. Muhammad finished his falafel and turned back into the bowels of his dwelling. The path of his steps on him from the walls. Faces were sticking out. Weird and bizarre. He saw them undeterred. He was used to it. It was the genie who attached himself to him for them. He did not give him room day or night, in fact he initiated him into the thoughts that set the events in motion. The genie was standing in his half-material form at a table with bomb parts under construction. He was used to them. He was often visited by beings from other dimensions. He was simply chosen for something and reconciled with it. Muhammad put on his hijab. He helped him not notice them so much. Whether it should be an angel, a genie or an asura. Whether good or bad. He

had nó time for these óddities. He needed tó fócús ón that bómb. In the middle óf that táble was á vest-shaped structure that served ás á base. He ádded pieces óf cargó there úsing carpet tape. She still needed sóme fine-tuning, just á few móre ádjústments. Pull ón here and try ón yóúrself here. And só. He had á strong feeling that he had fórgótten sómething. And there in that ground flóór róóm in the shadows á mysterióús demón óf its black and red cólór. He móve his magical pówers tó máke Móhammed self-explóde in á públic place full óf peóple. A heinóús act óf pósśible dámnation, but for á sweet promise in the name óf paradise with 72 virgins. Tó whóm yóú want tó deny súch an ópportúnity, he is often rejected. He had everything ready. Sóón he wanted tó blów himself úp in á sauare. But he spent só much time máking that bómb that anóther entity appeared in his vicinity. This time the genie Umm Al Dúnias with his giant ópen man-éating móúth. Alsó for the émpteenth time and só Móhammed knew what tó dó. He únlócked his hándgún and fired ónce directly intó his jaw. The genie spreads óút in space úntil it blows the screen óver his face, leaving ónly á hóle in the wall. He returns tó the táble. This cannót be endúred for lóng, he thinks and púts ón his vest, but at that móment an ángel appears tó him. -„What is yóúr name?" Múhammed asked him fróm únder his cúrtain. "Ali," the ángel ánswered him. The man in his Múslim headscarf thóught for á móment, listening tó what each óf the sides whispered tó him. Ali, Elái... That's ally in English. He is my ally in battle. He remóved his vest and threw it at the smóldering demón. Dazzled the súrróúnding área by mixing the celestial glów with the

explósión.

AN ANGEL'S STORY

"THIS IS THE WORK OF THE DEVIL HIMSELF," SAID THE WOMAN IN THE DARKENED LIBRARY, HANDING ANGELA A BOOK LABELED PHOBIA. -,,NOT HERE," ANSWERED ANGELA. "I NEED SOMETHING ELSE," SHE ADDED. -,,I'M NOT AN EXORCIST OR VERMIN LIKE THOSE SCUMBAGS AND WITCHES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF GRAY MAGIC. NEITHER OF THESE IS DELUSIONAL," SHE SPECIFIED HER EXISTENCE. SHE HAD DARK CURLY HAIR AND SLIGHTLY TANNED SKIN. BIG LIPS AND NOSE AND EYES. OH THOSE EYES. OVERSIZED AND DARK AS THE SKY ITSELF AFTER SUNSET. AND ABOVE THEM, NARROW EYEBROWS AND A CHEEKY FOREHEAD, IN WHICH HER UNTETHERED HAIR FROM A BUN FLOWED. -,,THEN WHO ARE YOU? THE WOMAN ASKED. -,,A MEDIUM WITH THE SKY," SHE SAID DRYLY, AS IF IT

WERE SCIENCE OF THE ORDER OF THE DAY. -,,YOU WOULDN'T EXPECT THAT, WOULD YOU? SHE ADDED CHEEKILY. THE WITHERED WOMAN OF THE LIBRARY, THE ONE AGED FOR DECADES, COLLAPSED. "SO WHAT DO YOU WANT?" -,,GIVE ME SOMETHING BY DION FORTUNE AND ALISTAIR CROWLEY." -,,GOOD," ANSWERED THE WOMAN AND WENT TO THE LIBRARY. -,,WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM FOR? -,,I HAVE THE FEELING THAT THEIR REINCARNATION HAS APPEARED HERE." -,,WHAT?" -,,WELL, YOU PROBABLY WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND."-,,PHE," THE OLD WOMAN SNEERED.-,,I DON'T SEE ANY HERE." -,,NOT REALLY?" SHE DIDN'T BELIEVE ANGELA. EVER SINCE SHE MANAGED TO STEAL AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PAPYRUS, WRITTEN IN HIERATIC SCRIPT, IN THIS WAY, THROUGH SIMONY, THAT IS TO SAY, A HOLY SHOP – A TRADE IN SPIRITUAL THINGS, SHE BELIEVED THAT ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING COULD BE FOUND. SHE WENT TO OLDER PRIVATE LIBRARIES AND SELECTED THE REMAINS OF COLLECTORS. FEW PEOPLE COULD TRULY APPRECIATE THESE SPECIMENS. FOR SOME A DUSTY STACK OF PAPERS, FOR HER A TREASURE. SHE DEVOTED TIME AND EFFORT TO OBTAIN OTHER IMPORTANT CLUES IN THE FORM OF BOOKS FULL OF INFORMATION. THROUGH THE HOLY SHOP, SHE ALSO MANAGED TO GET RARE

LITERATURE AND PROTECTED FROM BOTH SIDES, THAT IS, IN A WAY – FORBIDDEN. ANGELA WAS A SUPPORTER OF THE MODERN GOLDEN DAWN MOVEMENT. THIS INFLUENCE OF THE ISLANDS WHERE SHE GREW UP WAS SO DOMINANT IN HER ADOLESCENCE THAT SHE REACHED EUROPE IN ITS SPIRIT AND NAME. HERE SHE REVEALED THE INFLUENCE OF ANOTHER MOVEMENT , WHICH, AS SHE SOON DISCOVERED, WAS IN NO SMALL PART CONNECTED TO HER BELIEFS, BUT AT THE SAME TIME SHE DISCOVERED WHAT SHE WAS FACING HERE, NAMELY THE MODERN PHENOMENON OF THE SINGLE FREEMASONRY, WHOSE ROOTS REACHED DEEP INTO THE DARK TIMES OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. FIRST OF ALL, THE FACT THAT THEY CAN BE DANGEROUS. ABOVE ALL, BOHEMIA AND GERMANIA, WHICH WERE RULED BY THE ROSICRUCIANS LONG BEFORE NOW. THEY HAD THEIR OWN SECRET AGENDAS HERE, AND THEREFORE AGENTS WHO WERE ON HER HEELS WITHOUT ANYTHING. ONE COULD SAY THAT THE HAUNTINGS, OR PARANOIA OR EVEN PSYCHOSIS OF THESE SHADOWS OR GHOSTS WITH HIDDEN BLADES HAUNTED HER SINCE THE FIRST BOOK OBTAINED HERE. THE SECRET SOCIETY ALMOST ALWAYS ACTED THIS WAY. SOME MIGHT SAY, THEYRE JUST BOOKS, BUT FOR SOME PEOPLE, BOOKS ARE SOMETHING TO LEAN ON. STILL, SHE MADE NO BONES ABOUT IT. SHE KNEW THAT WITH THE HELP OF HER

abnormal abilities, she could keep herself alert enough. It was always the angels who communicated with her and let her know in advance how to proceed. This enlightenment was both her gift and her curse, and it was one of the main reasons she found herself here. As they say, from mud to puddle. -,,Show me," she pushed away the woman, who looked like exactly one of those from whom she could feel the affection for such organizations. -,,I'll take a look myself," she added. There really weren't any. She snorted greedily. "Well, at least I'll take this," she picked up the book from the table that the old lady had first offered her. -,,Well wait! You can't do that!" A woman snorted on her back. "You are a good lady, God will reward you." She hit the woman with a smile and ran away. Out into the streets of Prague and then to the church on Betlémské náměstí. There, however, she discovered that the book must have fallen out somewhere. At the same time, she felt that she was being tightly pressed all the way here. She stomped sullenly and strode briskly into the church. She sat down in the front row and began to pray intensively in renunciation formulas to establish contact with the angels. Here she heard

THEIR VOICES. THEY FLEW AROUND HER, WHISPERING TO HER FROM ALL SIDES. SHE HAD TO GET UP AND GO LIGHT ONE CANDLE. THE VOICE OF ONLY ONE OF ALL THE ANGELS REMAINED.

THERE ARE MANY AND MANY ANGELS. ANGELS OF THE HOUR. ANGELS OF THE ZODIAC. HOWEVER, THIS WAS THE VOICE OF ARCHANGEL GABRIEL HIMSELF. HE GAVE HER CLEAR TIPS AND INSTRUCTIONS ON WHERE TO PROCEED WITH HER BEHAVIOR. HERE IN THE HEART OF EUROPE, ALL THE WORLD'S INFLUENCES INTERSECTED. BUT SHE WAS YET TO FIND OUT EXACTLY HOW THE VOICE SOOTHED HER. SHE SAW THE PRIEST ENTERING THE CONFESSIONAL. SHE ALSO WENT IN THAT DIRECTION TO ASK FOR ABSOLUTION - FORGIVENESS OF SIN. "I DID IT AGAIN FATHER," ANGELA SPOKE LOUDLY IN THE WOODEN CABIN. -,,AND WHAT DID YOU DO ANGELINA," THE PRIEST REMEMBERED HER. -,,I STOLE THE BOOK, BUT I LOST IT ON THE WAY HERE." "WELL, IT WAS PROBABLY DESERVED," THE PRIEST ANSWERED HER. AT THAT MOMENT, ANGELA ALSO REMEMBERED THAT THE WOMAN HAD TOLD HER SOMETHING ABOUT THE DEVIL ALONG WITH THE BOOK. -,,SUCH A BOOK CERTAINLY DID NOT BELONG IN THE CHURCH, IF IT WAS STOLEN BY YOU ANGELINO. WILL YOU RENOUNCE THIS INNUMERABLE SIN

OF YOURS, WITH WHICH YOU HAVE COME TO ME FOR THE UMPTEENTH TIME?" -,,YES FATHER, I RENOUNCE HIM. I ASK FOR FORGIVENESS." -,,IN THAT CASE, BE FORGIVEN AND THANK GOD FOR OUR MASTER JAN HUS, WHO WAS BURNED AT THE STAKE, THAT THANKS TO HIM YOU DON'T HAVE TO PAY INDULGENCES HERE." IT WAS TRUE. ANGELA WAS IN THE HUSSITE CHAPEL DEDICATED TO THEIR MASTER, AND SHE WAS THERE EVERY TIME SHE STOLE A BOOK SOMEWHERE, OR AS THEY SAY HERE, SHE CHEATED. NOW IS THE RIGHT TIME FOR HER TO GO OUT AGAIN. SHE KICKED OPEN THE DOOR OF THE OAK CHAMBER AND WALKED TOWARDS THE EXIT OF THE BUILDING. BEFORE SHE LEFT ITS PREMISES, HOWEVER, SHE CHECKED HER LIGHTED CANDLE COVERED WITH FINE SAND IN THE STONE TROUGH. IT WAS DRY ON THE STREET, DARK CLOUDS SWIRLED AROUND THE REMNANTS OF THE FOGGY SKY. SOON IT WILL START TO RAIN. SHE DESCENDED THE DIRTY AND DUSTY STONE STEPS AND STEPPED ONTO THE SMOOTH, LARGE COBBLESTONES THAT COVERED THE STREETS HERE IN THE HISTORIC CENTER OF PRAGUE. AND WHAT HE DOESN'T SEE! THE BOOK SHE MYSTERIOUSLY DROPPED ON THE WAY HERE. SHE LAY MOTIONLESS ON THE OPPOSITE PILLAR OF THE CHURCH, HER DAMP AND WAVY SIDES BILLOWING ON HER IN THE GUSTS OF WIND THAT SWEPT REPEATEDLY THROUGH THE

STREET. SHE GRIPPED IT TIGHTLY. SHE COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. SHE QUICKLY HID IT UNDER HER TOPS AND WENT TO HER ABODE. SHE PREFERRED TO CHECK IT SEVERAL TIMES ON THE WAY TO MAKE SURE SHE STILL HAD IT, AND TO AVOID REPEATING THAT DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE CHURCH. INSIDE HER SMALLER APARTMENT, HER JACK ROUSSLEY TERRIER, NAMED SIMPLY JACK, WAS ALREADY WAITING FOR HER. SHE WAS CONVINCED THAT HE WAS THE REINCARNATION OF SPRING HEELED JACK, AN URBAN PHANTOM FROM VICTORIAN ENGLAND DURING AN EPIDEMIC, DURING WHICH HE APPEARED ABOVE BUILDINGS AND HAUNTED ALL WHO SAW HIM. EVEN PRAGUE HAD A VERY SIMILAR URBAN PHANTOM, ONLY IT APPEARED IN A DIFFERENT TIME AND UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME – PéRáK. JACK SLID THE EMPTY BOWL OVER TO HER AND SHE QUICKLY REFILLED IT FOR HIM BEFORE WALKING INTO HER ROOM. IT WAS WINTER HERE. SHE QUICKLY PLACED THE BOOK ON THE TABLE NEXT TO THE CANDLE, WHICH SHE LIT WITH THE MATCHES PLACED NEXT TO HER. SHE THEN TURNED AND TURNED THE TRIGGER ON THE ROOM HEATER ATTACHED TO THE WALL. SHE SAT DOWN NEXT TO THE BOOK AND CAREFULLY EXAMINED THE HEADING – PHOBIA. LATIN, A DEAD LANGUAGE, WITH NO NATIVE SPEAKERS. IT ALREADY HINTED TO HER THAT THIS BOOK MIGHT PARADOXICALLY BRING SOMETHING TO LIFE AND SHE

opened it. Her leather back, battered with brass edges, creaked. It was an illuminated manuscript, a manuscript with artistically colored pictorial accompaniments, such as was used in the medieval eons. Nowadays, that would be considered a rarity. The font is calligraphically smooth, as if it were still written with a bird feather and natural ink. It was clear at first glance that this was no ordinary book. Her right temple hurt. She could feel the book affecting her mind from the moment she opened it. She heard the buzzing in her ears and the hidden words of the angels assuring her that she was in complete protection against any insidious idea created by blood-sucking, disease-carrying insects. It is so easy to plant an egg of thought in the subconscious with a book. But she felt something else from her. As if the book had chosen her. Recently, she focused on the connection of the Saxon Golden Dawn movement with the local Eastern European Rosicrucianism, which was supposed to have a new personification of Alistair Crowley. But not only him, but Dion Fortune, according to her information, would be located somewhere in the western region of Europe. She

received wisdom from the angels in the form of knowledge, for example, that reincarnated souls mission with other reincarnated souls who would be close to each other in their life essence.
and this book was the remnant of one such personality. a dragon slayer who inhabited this city. manuscript, discussed the description of the life of this person shrouded in mystery of his time. the book thus functioned as a kind of diary, but it was not written by the person who discussed it. so this meant that the dragon slayer, as the persona was referred to, had its own scribe. nowadays - the secretariat. here he mentions the studies of that shadowy man of the unwritten law who set out on journeys to learn about the past in order to be able to predict the future and face any danger lurking even from a blind spot. at the beginning of his quest for knowledge, he mentions the secret chronicles of the mongols, as the inner confessions of this culture of the world's second largest historical empire. she opened the eyes of the world with her influence, which was fundamental to everything, wherever the government from asia itself dominated under her leadership. it was

THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY, AND WHEREVER THE MONGOL'S FOOT LANDED MEANT ONLY ONE THING – CHAOS. THE RESULT OF THIS WAS ALWAYS THE SAME, REGARDLESS OF THE CULTURE OR POWER ATTACKED. IT CAUSED ISOLATION AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE EXISTING SOCIETY. WHOEVER RULED THE COUNTRY, HIS POWER DECLINED WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE MONGOLS. HE WAS FORCED TO FEND FOR HIMSELF EVEN THOUGH HIS NAME MIGHT STILL MEAN SOMETHING. UNTIL THEN, THE MONARCH HAD HIS POWER, PROPERTY AND EDUCATION, OR HIS INTENTION. HE HAD HIS PEOPLE AROUND HIM FOR VARIOUS ACTIVITIES THAT HE DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ALONE THANKS TO THEM. BUT WITH THE ARRIVAL OF THE MONGOL INFLUENCE, EVERYTHING TURNED INTO THE OPPOSITE. HE HAD TO LEARN TO PERFORM ALL HIS FUNCTIONS BY HIMSELF. NO MORE SERVANTS AROUND HIM. IF HE STILL NEEDED A SERVICE, HE HAD TO PAY MORE FOR IT, BUT ALSO COUNT ON THE FACT THAT THE PERSON MAY NOT BEHAVE HONESTLY TOWARDS HIM, AS THE CHAOS IN SOCIETY GREW AND MEANT A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE WHO WAITED FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT. THE ENTIRE WORLD THAT HAD BEEN EXPLORED UNTIL THEN PRAYED FOR THE REPULSION OF THEIR DRASTIC ATTACK. GENGHIS KHAN LED HIS TROOPS THROUGH ALL OF ASIA AND RUSSIA TO EUROPE AND LO! THE LAND FROM

WHICH THEY RETREATED – BOHEMIA, BOHEMIA. THE HUNGARIANS OF THAT TIME. ONE OF THE POWERFUL MONGOL CHIEFTAINS WAS ALSO BURIED HERE, AT LEAST, ACCORDING TO LEGEND. NEVERTHELESS, EVEN UNTIL HIS DEATH, HE CRUSHED SMALL ESTATES AND FAMILIES WITH WEAK ROOTS INTO DUST AND SOLITUDE IN POVERTY. HOWEVER, THE MONGOL HORDE ALSO ADVANCED TO THE MIDDLE EAST, WHERE THEY HAD A VERY SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON THE MIDDLE EASTERN CURRENT RADIATING ALL THE WAY TO THIS FABLED PARADISE LAND – BOHEMIA. MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE 11TH-CENTURY ISLAMIC EXTREMIST MOVEMENT OF THE HASHASHINS, ITS PROGENITOR OF TERRORISM, WAS THE SEED OF ASSASSINATION OPERATIONS UNDER ONE ROOF AS A HOMOGENEOUS ARMY OF HIRED KILLERS – UNTIL THE MONGOL INVASION, WHICH HAD AS MUCH INFLUENCE ON IT AS ON EVERYTHING ELSE. NEVERTHELESS, THIS INFLUENCE REMAINED SECRET EVEN FOR, IN ESSENCE, THE HASHASH ORGANIZATION, BACKED BY AL-AFDAL, KNOWN PRIMARILY FOR THE USE OF OPIUM LEADING TO SUICIDE BY ASSASSINS. AFTER SHE TOO PARTIALLY MANAGED TO AVERT THE MONGOL ATTACK, OR BYPASSED IT, AS WAS HER WONT, SHE BECAME MORE SECRETIVE. IT IS THEREFORE NOT SURPRISING THAT IT CHOSE PRAGUE AS ONE OF THE SUBSEQUENT PLACES FOR THE

proclamation of its tradition, as a classic stop for traders with expensive fabrics, spices and or precious stones. That is why there is also a legend circulating in Czech culture that the Middle Eastern influence played a fundamental role in the creation of the capital city of Prague, as a crossroads between peoples and cultures. Therefore, the influence of the Hashashins appeared here only after the fragmentation of the original organization by the invasion of the Mongols. Nevertheless, it remains a well-known fact that the archenemy of the Hashashins have always been the Templars. This order, founded in 1118 in Jerusalem, was the first to lay the foundation stones of banking. The Teutonic order had the same influence in Bohemia as it did throughout Europe. The struggle between these two factions, the Templars and the Hashashins, has intensified in a less visible sphere since the arrival of the Mongols. Yet this fight continues to this day, just by different means and above all, it gives both a proper counterpart and they wouldn't be what they are without each other.

The conquest of Constantinople, i.e. today's Istanbul, in the 15th century by the Turks finally showed the

SUPERIORITY OF ISLAM OVER CHRISTIANITY, WHICH ALSO HAD A LATER INFLUENCE UNTIL THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA IN THE 15TH CENTURY, WHEN THE WORLD BEGAN TO SHOW ITSELF IN THE DIRECTION OF EXPANSION AND WAS NO LONGER CONCERNED WITH INTERNAL RELATIONS AS MUCH AS THIS WAS THE CASE FROM THE TIME OF THE BABYLONIAN EMPIRE UNTIL THE INVASION OF THE MONGOLS, WHICH CAUSED THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE COMMUNITY INTO THE RULE OF INDIVIDUALS AND SELF-INITIATION. AMERICA, MADE UP OF NATIVES WHO ORIGINALLY CAME FROM ASIA, WAS NOW BEING LITERALLY BATTERED BY AN INFLUX OF AGGRESSIVE AND DISEASE-CARRYING EUROPEANS. AT THAT TIME, THANKS TO THE CONVENIENT POSITION OF THE DEPOPULATING EUROPE, INFLUENCE FROM AFRICA IN THE FORM OF ANIMISM AND ISLAND PRACTICES FROM THE NEWLY DISCOVERED CARIBBEAN ISLANDS BEGAN TO REACH HERE. ALSO THE INFLUENCE OF INDIA, WHERE THE MONGOLS DID NOT EVEN REACH. GODS, CASTES, KAMASUTRA AND WE COULD GO ON. THAT IS WHY INDIAN CULTURE IS CONSIDERED TO BE QUITE PURE AND UNTOUCHED. HOWEVER, THAT CHANGED IN II. WORLD WAR. HOWEVER, FEW PEOPLE REALIZE THIS. HOWEVER, FEW OF THESE INFLUENCES HAD A CHANCE TO SUSTAIN THEMSELVES IN THE CHRISTIAN FIELD. WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT, MIGRATION AND THE SPREADING OF NEW VIEWS ON THE

WORLD HAS ALWAYS BEEN THERE, AFTER ALL, EVEN THESE CZECH COUNTRIES ARE VICTIMS OF THE AMBASSADORS FROM THESSALONIKI – CYRIL AND METHODIUS. ONLY THE INFLUENCE OF NORTH AMERICA – THE ILLUMINATI, ORIGINALLY FOUNDED IN THE 18TH CENTURY IN GERMANY, WHICH FOLLOWED ON FROM FREEMASONRY FOUNDED IN ENGLAND IN 1717, HAD ITS FINGERS ON THE SUBSEQUENT EVENTS OF EVERYTHING ELSE. LIKEWISE THE HERMETIC ORDER OF THE HOLY DAWN, OF WHICH ALISTAIR CROWLEY WAS A PART, FOUNDED IN 1888, UNTIL ITS VISIBLE DECLINE INTO THE DEPTHS AT THE END OF THE 20TH CENTURY. AT THE SAME TIME, NEWS ABOUT RASPUTIN WAS CIRCULATING AROUND THE WORLD. AN EXCEPTIONAL INDIVIDUAL FROM RUSSIA, BELONGING TO KHLYSTA, TRANSLATED AS A WHIP – A RUSSIAN UNDERGROUND SECT BELONGING TO CHRISTIANS, OF WHICH HE WAS ALSO THE MAIN REPRESENTATIVE.

ANGELA HAD TO GET UP. THE BOOK GAVE HER EXACTLY THE ANSWERS SHE NEEDED, AND MORE. AS IF IT WAS PRECISELY WRITTEN JUST FOR HER ALONE. SHE HAD TO WALK TO HER BOOKCASE IN THE SIDE OF THE ROOM AND RAN HER FINGER OVER THE SPINE OF THE BOOK COMPLETE GOLDEN DAWN SYSTEM OF MAGIC, WORTH SOMETHING LIKE 12 THOUSAND. SHE REMEMBERED VERY WELL HOW SHE CAME TO HER. IT WAS

IN THE PERSONAL BOOK COLLECTION OF A MAN WHO HANGED HIMSELF IN THE WINDOW OF HIS SECOND-HAND BOOKSHOP. SHE PAID ONLY A SYMBOLIC FEE FOR HER TO A FAMILY GRIEVING THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE. STILL, IT DID NOT GIVE HER SUCH PLEASURE AS THE BOOK SHE WAS NOW READING. SHE HAD TO RUSH BACK TO HER TO INHALE MORE KNOWLEDGE. THE ROSICRUCIANS, AN ORDER FOUNDED ON MYSTICAL SOURCES IN GERMANY IN THE 15TH CENTURY, BUT OFFICIALLY ONLY IN THE 17TH CENTURY, LED IN THE SECOND AND OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM THE EXPANSION TO AMERICA, WHERE IT WAS POSSIBLE TO RE-ESTABLISH A SIMILAR WAY OF LIFE AS IT USED TO BE IN EUROPE BEFORE THE MONGOLS. IT LED TO ALCHEMY AND THUS A MORE INNER KNOWLEDGE OF ONESELF, AS THE ANATOMY OF MAN. HOWEVER, AFTER A PERIOD OF FUNCTIONING OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS, ONE OF THEM, WHICH HAD BEEN INVISIBLE FOR A LONG TIME, HAD TO REVEAL ITSELF AND THIS ESSENTIALLY CAUSED THE FIRST WORLD WAR BY THE ASSASSINATION OF FRANCIS FERDINAND D'ESTE. HERE WE CAN SEE A TYPICAL HASHÁŠIN INFLUENCE ON THE ACTIONS OF AN ASSASSIN NAMED GABRIELO D PRINCIP, WHO COINCIDENTALLY IS BURIED IN ONE OF THE PRAGUE CEMETERIES. IT WAS FOLLOWED BY II. THE WORLD WAR, WHEN GERMANY ADOPTED THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE REMAINING

NATIONAL CULTURES. BY CONNECTING WITH OTHER TOTALITARIAN REGIMES, THERE WAS A WAR WITH COUNTRIES THAT THEREBY SHOWED THEIR GREATNESS TO THEIR OPPONENTS, OR CONVERSELY TO THEIR ALLIES. THIS CONNECTED ALMOST THE ENTIRE WORLD. THAT IS, BOTH HORIZONTALLY AND VERTICALLY, BUT ONLY ON CERTAIN AREAS, AND THAT IS WHY THE ENEMIES OF THAT TIME ARE NOW STAYING IN THE COMMERCIAL PLANE. END OF II. WORLD WAR I IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC WAS FIRST CHARACTERIZED BY WHAT STARTED WORLD WAR I – THE ASSASSINATION OF HEYDRICH BY SEVERAL CZECH AND ONE SLOVAK SOLDIER. WHAT FOLLOWED WAS NOTHING BUT MALICE AND VINDICTIVENESS ON THE PART OF GERMANY, BUT IT MARKED THE FIRST IMPORTANT WEAKENING OF NAZI POWER. BUT THEN WHAT WAS THE ABSOLUTE END OF THE WAR? – PILSEN LIBERATED BY THE AMERICANS, PRAGUE REMAINED TO RUSSIA. THE COLD WAR MEANT THE BIPOLARITY OF THE WORLD BY BOTH OPPOSITE POLES – SURREPTITIOUSLY OVERCOME BY NUCLEAR TEST ROUTES BY THE WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL COUNTRIES. THE INFLUENCE FROM THE LATIN COUNTRIES, WHERE HITLER ALLEGEDLY FLED, HAS A TOUCH OF BARONY, WHICH MEANS PROSTITUTION AND DRUGS. THEN CAME GLOBALIZATION, ANGLICIZATION COMING OUT OF THE ENGLISH EMPIRE, THE BIGGEST EVER. THE SECOND LARGEST

WAS THE MONGOLIAN ONE. IT COMES AT THE CONNECTION OF NORTH AND SOUTH BY AN INDIVIDUAL IN THE VERTICAL PLANE AS WELL AS THE HORIZONTAL ONE. WHICH MEANS THE INTERSECTION OF ALL DIRECTIONS OF THE WORLD AND RACES. ALL THOSE WHO CAME FROM THE MIDDLE EAST AND THE ORIENT, OR ASIA OR OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD, THEY ALWAYS REPRESENTED SOMETHING NOBLE HERE, BECAUSE IT WAS NOT COMMON HERE, AND THEIR PRESENCE HERE COULD LIFT MANY LOCAL RESIDENTS ABOVE THE CONSERVATISM AND MONOTONY OF LIFE. STILL, THAT WAS THE NOMADIC NATURE OF THESE FOREIGN LINES. HERE, THE TEMPLARS REPRESENTED A PASSIVE FORCE, THEIR GREEK CROSS ALWAYS RADIATED AN IMPRESSION OF CONSTANCY AND STRENGTH, AND THEREFORE IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE SAME SYMBOL IS ALSO USED AS A PLUS SIGN – THE PURE SOUL OF BANKING.

THE DIRECT EASTERN INFLUENCE, THE IMAGINARY RUSSIA AND THE STATES INFLUENCED BY IT, ALWAYS HAD ONE EXCEPTIONAL PERSON OUT OF ALL, BOTH IN TERMS OF THEIR SKILLS AND ABILITIES. ALWAYS ONE CALLED-UP GREAT IN A LONG TIME WHO REPRESENTED, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THEIR STUNNING TERRITORY. THE ROSICRUCIANS AND FREEMASONS, ON THE OTHER HAND, MEANT BUILDING AND EDUCATION AT HIGH LEVELS IN CENTRAL EUROPE. COMPULSORY EDUCATION WAS

ALSO INTRODUCED HERE – BY MARIA THERESA. IT THEN SPREAD INTO THE PRESENT FORM OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS RUN BY THE STATE SYSTEM ALL OVER THE WORLD. HOWEVER, THIS EVENTUALLY LED TO SCHOOL MASSACRES – FOR EXAMPLE, COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL IN AMERICA, WHERE YOU CAN SEE THE CONNECTION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL INFLUENCE OF MASS EDUCATION AND BOOKS, IF WE CONSIDER THE FAMOUS AUTHOR OF THE NEON BIBLE, WHO STUDIED AT THE SAME SCHOOL, AND THE MAIN ASSASSINS WERE TWO YOUNG STUDENTS WHO FINISHED THE WHOLE MASSACRE BY THEIR JOINT SUICIDE IN THE LIBRARY. FURTHERMORE, CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO HAVE A MAJOR INFLUENCE HERE, AS COUNTRIES THAT CELEBRATE DEATH. IN THESE COUNTRIES, DEATH WAS NOT ONLY CELEBRATED, BUT IT WAS ALWAYS MUSICIANS WHO HAD THE MAIN ROLE IN ALL SOCIAL EVENTS. THIS SPREAD FOR A WHILE, AS THEY WERE VERY IMPORTANT AS A MODEL FOR THE WHOLE WORLD, WHICH WAS AT FIRST OVERPOPULATED AND TRAPPED IN A VICIOUS CIRCLE BASED ON SYSTEMATIC ROBOTIC PROCESSES THAT SOCIETY HAD SET UP FOR ITSELF. IT WAS ONLY AFTER THE PANDEMIC CAME THAT HE HAD TO DEAL WITH THE MASS VICTIMS IT LEFT BEHIND, AND THIS IS PRECISELY WHERE THE ESSENCE OF THE INFLUENCE OF THESE DEATH-CELEBRATING COUNTRIES

came into play. Likewise, in connection with the Czech Republic, where the convention applies: "As long as it is sung, it has not died yet," which is tailor-made for this case. For the whole world, the ceremony of accepting death is essential. In the East, they get drunk with alcohol, because their nature clings to celebrating everything in this way, just as in the South, traditional shooting is taken as a celebration, and in the North it is sex for a change, the West enjoys the power of money or likes to show off in its spirit. However, death is similarly celebrated in most cultures, but each one interprets it differently. Some believe in reincarnation, others in heaven, hell or paradise. However, there are also regions where they believe in spiritual reincarnation, that is, not reincarnation, but the absorption of the soul of the dead. From a scientific point of view, the process of annihilation. And this was needed for the whole world in application, for death strengthens the will of those who are still living. However, if the pandemic in its wording means a global infection, the whole world gets on the same level in solving one problem.

however, what happened after the situation seemed to be relatively resolved was like a nasty hornet sting in the back between the shoulder blades. and the attack on ukraine by russia. at this moment there was a feeling of the outbreak of a kind of iii. world war, if we take into account the original playing field globally healed after the fight against the virus, the entire conflict took place. on the flip side of this conflict, as is the custom, bad things also bring good things, and that is mostly technological progress, as a result of wars. as the only possible solid reference point we can now take into account, because of its political values of the future, namely in 2036 – the time of canada with its multicultural influence on the whole world, as the second largest country in the world with the smallest population, is coming. this is supposed to be the future state-of-the-art colony of humanity. after it comes the time 2054, where the unification of africa, modeled after europe, has a major influence. this already brings about the unification of the north and the south – australia, africa, europe, the nordic states. the decline of

NORTH AMERICA IS THREATENED, AND HERE IS WHAT THE DRAGON SLAYER WAS WORKING ON IN THE CZECH LAND WHERE HE LIVED. IN 2064, SOMETHING LIKE ACCEPTING ALL THE INFLUENCES THAT HAVE ALWAYS PASSED OVER EUROPE SHOULD HAPPEN AND UNCONSCIOUSLY SLOWLY INTEGRATE IT BY SELECTING THE PARTS OF EACH OF THEM THAT ARE ACCEPTABLE. AN EXAMPLE CAN BE SEX WITH SEVERAL PEOPLE AT THE SAME TIME, OR SOFISM – THAT IS, MYSTICISM SOUGHT IN DANCE, THE SAME EXAMPLE CAN BE CUISINE – ALL FROM THE MIDDLE EAST, OR AFRICAN, EVEN AUSTRALIAN INFLUENCE. OF COURSE, EVERYWHERE ON THIS CONTINENT, AS THEY SAY, A DIFFERENT REGION HAS A DIFFERENT MORAL, BUT OVER TIME THERE WILL BE SUCH INTEGRITY AND FINDING ONESELF IN OTHER CULTURES AND ACCEPTING SOMETHING NEW THAT THE WORLD WILL GROW SPIRITUALLY. HERE, IN A FOOTNOTE, THERE WAS AN ADDITIONAL REFERENCE TO THE GAP BETWEEN THE AGENDAS OF THE FUTURE, WHICH SHOULD COME FROM SOMEWHERE IN LATIN AMERICA AND SHOULD BE LOCATED IN THE GAP BETWEEN AFRICA AND CANADA. SO IT SHOULD BE IN THE 40S AFTER 2000. THAT WAS JUST HIS CONCEIT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HIS WORLDLY EDUCATION. HE KNEW THAT IF THE FOURTH PARTY HE POINTED TO DID NOT HAPPEN, ANOTHER WOULD REPLACE IT. EITHER THE MIDDLE POINT

between Canada, Africa and the Czech Republic, or the next one would appear after Africa or the Czech Republic or between them. The image of a snake eating itself, as some kind of cycle that drove the process of individuals like the dragon slayer himself. Of course, the differentiation of education between north and south and east and west will also take place diagonally. That is, in the complete line-up scheme - like a snowflake.

And all of this connects in one place - in Prague. Here in this place the dragon slayer had his harem. His gods were women and he had his faith for them. He took this idea of his harem from the Hashashins, and not only that. In the same way, from the Middle Eastern, Southern and Southwestern countries, he also found smoking tobacco and cannabis in his lifestyle and refusing alcohol as much as possible, with the exception of red wine with wafers, or, in an Americanized way, with chips, like modern-day Hussiteism, because he believed that if the Christian church burned master Jan Hus with a Latin cross, he should be recognized by the Islamic idea of one God Allah and more of his messengers, as another of them.

ON THE CONTRARY, THE CRUSADERS, AS THEIR ENEMIES, HAD BUILT THE FOUNDATIONS OF BANKING HERE, WHICH THE DRAGON SLAYER ACCEPTED AS PART OF HIS SELF. THIS HAPPENED BY INVENTING HIS NEW CURRENCY – OTWC. HOWEVER, IT AROSE FROM THE FINAL RESULT OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM – AS A SO-CALLED NEWPRINT, OR BLUEPRINT, TRANSLATED AS A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW WORLD CURRENCY. IT WAS ALSO INTENDED TO BE A TOOL TO BEND SPACE-TIME TO AVOID THE THIRD WORLD WAR. IN ADDITION, THE DRAGON SLAYER ALSO INVESTED IN PHARMACY, AS AN ALTERNATIVE INTAKE OF NEW PHARMACEUTICAL OPTIONS AFTER THE INFLUENCE OF THE ROSICRUCIANS AND ALCHEMISTS. AND ABOVE ALL HALLUCINOGENIC SYRUPS, STIMULATING NASAL SPRAYS, OR TABLETS FOR SEXUAL SUPPORT, WHICH HE LIKED TO PSYCHOACTIVATE EVEN MORE BY COMBINING THEM WITH MICRODOSES OF DRUGS, WHICH ALWAYS MENTALLY CONNECTED HIM TO IDEAS DEALING WITH THE SCIENCES OF EVERYTHING, TODAY IN THE URBAN DICTIONARY REFERRED TO AS GEEKING. EVEN JUST ARGUING INSIDE HIS HEAD, BROUGHT HIM TO THE IDEA OF CAUSING THAT TIME LOOP TO AVERT WHAT WAS COMING AND AT THE SAME TIME MOVE HIM TO THE RIGHT PLACE SO THAT EVERYTHING WOULD FIT TOGETHER LIKE SOME COSMIC MECHANISM. BUT HE HAD TO CREATE SOMETHING ELSE

IN HONOR OF THIS, BECAUSE THE SOCIETY CEASED TO BELIEVE IN ANYTHING THAT HAD SEEMED REAL TO IT UNTIL THEN FOR ITS SUPPORT IN MOMENTS OF WEAKNESS. HERE IN BOHEMIA THERE WAS A PRECISE GEOGRAPHICAL BLENDING OF THE INFLUENCES OF ALL THE SLOWLY DECLINING CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES AND THEIR SYMBOLS OF CROSSES. THE CLASSIC LATIN ONE ON WHICH JESUS CHRIST WAS CRUCIFIED, BUT NO ONE HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED ON THE OTHER CROSSES RULING EUROPE – GREEK AND ORTHODOX. HOWEVER, THE DRAGON SLAYER DISCOVERED IN DION FORTUNE'S BOOKS THAT ONE WHO DISCLOSES TO SOCIETY THE SECRET PRACTICES OF OCCULT SUBJECTS SHOULD END UP ON THE CROSS. HOWEVER, THE DRAGON SLAYER TOOK IT IN HIS OWN WAY, THAT HE IS SOMEONE WHO MUST PAY WITH HIS LIFE TO SAVE THE WORLD AND IN WHOM PEOPLE WILL BELIEVE. AND THE DRAGON SLAYER SAID:-,,THERE IS NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING, IT IS ONLY NECESSARY TO BELIEVE." THEREFORE, THROUGH HIS EXPERIENCES WITH HIS WORLD'S COLLECTED SEXUAL COMPANIONS, AS HIS TWELVE-PIECE HAREM, HE ALREADY SUSPECTED, THANKS TO THE SYNCRETIC INTERMINGLING AND CURSING OF RELIGION FROM THE BLACK HEART OF THE WORLD, STARTING AND NOT ENDING WITH THE WHOLE WORLD, THAT IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO WORSHIP A PERSON, BUT ABOVE ALL AN OBJECT. AS A RESULT, HE HAD TO

CHOOSE A SUITABLE COMPROMISE FOR ALL CROSSES, NOT ONLY FOR THE CASE OF CRUCIFIXION, BUT ALSO FOR ITS MEANING – THUS A NEW CROSS WAS BORN – THE LATIN-GREEK CROSS.

A COMBINATION OF GREEK AND LATIN WITH SIMILARITIES TO ORTHODOX. HOWEVER, HE DELIBERATELY CHOSE IT TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, AS IT SEEMED MORE APPROPRIATE FOR THE CURRENT LIFESTYLE. GREEK FOR PHARMACY AND BANKING AND LATIN FOR EVERYTHING THE BIBLE HAS REFERRED TO SO FAR. HOWEVER, WHEN HE ADDED A CIRCLE IN THE MIDDLE, IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE A SYMBOL OF THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE FOLLOWING THE BIG PLUS SYMBOL. THE WHOLE HAD A ZODIACAL EFFECT, IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE BASED ON SELECTIVITY NOT ONLY ON THE CHARACTER OF EXOTIC ORIGIN, BUT ALSO ON THE ZODIAC SIGN OF HIS COMPANIONS. HE SUSPECTED THAT A PERSON WOULD NEED TO BE SACRIFICED, SO HE DECIDED ON HIS OPTION – HE WILL USE A TIME LOOP TO BEND SPACE-TIME, IN WHICH HE HIMSELF WILL BE LOST, AND THE ONLY THING LEFT AFTER HIM WILL BE THIS CROSS. THIS REVELATION WAS SHOCKING AND PAINFUL FOR ANGELINA. IT WAS AS IF SHE FELT HIS INNER STRUGGLE WITH HIMSELF OF ALL THE CONFLICTING INFLUENCES THAT HAD ACCUMULATED IN HIM OVER THOSE LIFETIMES. IN THE END, HOWEVER, SHE READ

BETWEEN THE LINES THAT HE WAS A BRAVE FIGHTER AND A BRILLIANT LOVER. IF HE COULD REGULARLY HAVE SEX WITH HIS TWELVE WIVES, HE BOUGHT EACH OF THEM A RING AND TOOK HER STRAIGHT FROM THE FAMOUS HOUSE TO THE REST, WHO WERE ALREADY WAITING AT HIS HOUSE, WHERE, AS IS THE CUSTOM, THE WHOLE NUMBER AND ALL OF THEM REPENTED AT ONCE. THANKS TO THIS, HE WAS CALLED A SO-CALLED SUPERSEXUAL. HE BELIEVED THAT IF HE HAD THE RIGHT COMPANY LIKE THIS, HE WOULD BE ABLE TO ACCOMPLISH WHAT HE HAD PLANNED TO DO ALL ALONG. HIS WOMEN GAVE HIM SUCH POWER THAT HE WAS ABLE TO CONTROL THE LOOP OF THE COSMIC LAW OF TIME WITH IT. IN THE CASE OF THE DRAGON SLAYER, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO HIS HANDWRITING, THERE WAS ALSO ANOTHER REASON FOR HIS SACRIFICE. HE HAD ALL THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC IN WOMEN AROUND HIM AND HE KNEW HOW TO SUBCONSCIOUSLY INFLUENCE THEM SO MUCH THAT THEY WERE JEALOUS OF EACH OTHER SO MUCH THAT THEY ALL FELL IN LOVE WITH EACH OTHER.

HOWEVER, HE HIMSELF NEVER SHARED HIS ZODIAC SIGN. HE WAS, IN SHORT, AS THE TIMES CREATED HIM. HE HAD HIS OWN WRITER WHO WROTE FOR HIM WHAT HE WANTED. FOR, AS IT LATER TURNED OUT, HE WAS JUST A GHOST. PROBABLY THE

FUTURE, AS THE WRITER CALLED IT. AS A PERSON WHO IS OMNIPOTENT AND OMNIPOTENT, HE IS AWARE OF HIS PRESENCE AND SPENDS IT ACCORDING TO HIS BLESSING FOR THE LIFE ASSIGNED TO HIM AS A CHARACTER PASSING THROUGH THE EPOCHS OF THE WORLD IN EACH TIME A DIFFERENT EMBODIMENT, ACCEPTABLE FOR HIS TIME. HE MANIFESTS HIS INFLUENTIAL EXISTENCE IN IT BY EXPERIENCING LIFE WITH THE OTHER INHABITANTS OF THE PLANET, ONLY MANIFESTING ABOVE THE STANDARD. IN ADVANCED TIMES, WHEN PEOPLE BEGAN TO INVESTIGATE MORE INTO THE ESSENCE OF THEMSELVES, SUCH AN INDIVIDUAL COULD BECOME A TARGET FOR THE LABEL SOCIOPATH. HOWEVER, FEW INDIVIDUALS WITH THIS LABEL WOULD BE ABLE TO REALIZE THE BELONGING OF ALL THINGS AND ACCEPT THEM WITH THE ABILITY OF THEIR POWER TO USE THE ENERGY THAT IT HAS ACQUIRED TO BE USED EQUALLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF EVERYTHING FROM WHICH IT DREW. IN ADDITION, WITH THE REALIZATION OF WHAT EXISTENTIAL THINKING COULD NOT OR DID NOT WANT TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF BECAUSE IT WAS NOT ABLE TO ACCEPT THE IDEA THAT IT WOULD BE REPLACED BY A NEW ONE, BASED ON THE PREVIOUS ONE. AS IS ALWAYS TRUE IN HISTORY – EVERYTHING HAS ITS SUCCESSOR. THE THEORY OF BOTH EVOLUTION AND REVOLUTION IS NOT RECORDED TO BE REJECTED OR ACCEPTED, BUT IN FACT IS

merely to be considered. Only the third option is considered the most balanced. Just as, for example, the art world has its genres and their namesakes, they too must naturally have their successors. Angelina stood up. She had to breathe this. She was pacing around the room. She then stopped by the bookcase and scanned it all. That book is mentally connected with the Hussite Church. She realized the thing that she initially looked at as something completely unimportant. What she read affected her emotions so much that it balanced it and caused a reaction to her analytical thinking, in which she realized that it must naturally have a real ending, the other one. The one hidden and yet visible at first glance. Above all here, in the area close to Prague Castle, where flags with the emblem of the Czech two-tailed lion could be seen from the window.

If the Dragon Slayer disappeared, he had to reappear somewhere. And that answer is found in this book itself.

Beneath the foothills of the mountains, somewhere deep beyond Hungary, stretches the small area of Geamana, a Romanian village. It is disappearing due to the slow flooding of toxic mud, copper compounds from a nearby mine, in which one day miners inadvertently dug through the walls with a natural reservoir of this mud. Those who managed to save themselves from the floods of brown, thick and vapor-soaked liquid at first often ended up for a long time on one of the stone islands, where mud surrounded them in a toxic spill. Fearing certain death, the workers passed the time by talking about even more terrifying things to banish the fear of being afraid of the mud. It was such a nature of theirs that for someone from afar it could seem at first like hitting a stone against a stone, however, it had its effect. -„Have you ever heard of a stolen kidney? -„How like stolen?"-„You just wake up with no memory and a hole sewn up in your

side." -„You can have that as a pocket afterwards," another of the trio started making fun of it.-„Leave it, these creepy pastes are absolutely useless here, we have to figure out how to get out of here." -„Such a Slender man has long arms, he would be quite useful here. He would just reach across the stream of mud and drag us over." -„Or such a Siren Head could summon, for example, a rescue helicopter." -„That's the art of inventing some kind of monster for a video game. How about such a picture, only a real character can paint that," stood up the only one of the trio who wanted to keep his cool.-„I heard about images that drive you crazy. -„Not possible!" -„But is!" -„Well, if it is a fact that children sometimes live in their bodies, then it must also be a fact that someone can go crazy from a picture." -„What kind of nonsense is this?! Lumps in the body?! -„What about a child born in a grave? And that really happened!" -„This is disgusting! -„No! It's disgusting what an assassin with a hook instead of a hand can do to you! "Well, a lot of blood." -„What a lot of blood! Finished bloody mary!" -„I can't stand listening to this anymore!" The only one of them who didn't hold any other fear inside him jumped into the toxic mud, which immediately began to devour and corrode him as if it were the external stomach of some unknown predatory existence.The other two looked at each other and

then without a single word they sat on a ledge from the flowing mud, emitting fumes, leaning on each other. Some time passed like this, and out of desperation, they continued to tell each other even more horrible stories or similar topics that delayed their impending death. The toxic mud had already reached their shoes and started to dissolve their soles. They looked at each other, thinking they would see something in each other that would save them. But the opposite appeared to them. Both were completely disgusted by being in the zone of toxic fumes. The fumes were causing skin to peel off and living tissue to expand. Further damage nuclear marrow of the bones, so they began to show various body deformations and mutations.-„But you are disgusting!" One yelled at the other.-„You're ugly! Ugh! Look at you!" So one of them leaned forward to see his face in the reflection of the liquid, but he soon discovered something that had eluded him all the time - the mud does not have a mirror-like surface, and so he saw nothing but falling into the smelly mud, because his already distorted by toxicity the other tripped his feet. The mud hissed and swallowed him like a mouthful. The last one didn't cheer much. Before long he had to stand on the tips of his worn-out boots on the last bump lurking above the bubbling mud. His knees were already crooked as his joints softened and his bones rippled. In the end, his

fate also rested in the stagnant level of that toxic mud, which also finally found its passivity.

PARANOIRE

He came out of his house and put on his hat. Wind blew. To some he looked like a mobster, to others he looked like a detective. But he was dressed like that only because that's how the townspeople dressed everyday. Suit and hat. Exceptional tie. He headed downtown. Neonecromegalometropolis. A lot has changed here with the growth of the city, after the existence of ghouls was revealed, even though their existence was supposed to remain a secret. The locals couldn't get used to it for a long time and then came up with the idea that they wanted to start using the tunnels dug under the ghoul city for more technology. They built a subway, an underground integrated transport out of them. Another place for the surface dwellers to

Live was built underground from the dirt. Here on the surface, on the contrary, for ghouls from underground. The city threw down its walls and built new ones. The dome has gone digital. The subway and entire suburban teleports ran on the energy of deuterium, the core of the Dragon Loop, as well as up to the heights of some towering buildings. As well as longitudinally through the city. After entering the subway down, a roadblock with a giant bone machine gun and two skeletons in black and red uniforms appeared halfway under the stairs. They weren't checking anyone, they were just there for warning and in case of any rioters. Every once in a while they found some. No matter who it was, the gun always blew them to shreds. Then the subway arrived. Made of shiny metals and encrusted with precious stones, it shone with a splitter on the front. Inside, full of everything that was found in the city, no matter what. Squeezing on each other. A ride like a roller coaster, but underground. The car came to a stop each time with the sound of grinding edges and the

popping of the spreading crystals that had been built into it as brakes. A single drawn-out whine. An unpleasant sound, but many residents here lacked ears anyway. Opening and closing massive doors and suddenly another station was already waiting. Those bony Gestapo guys behind a heavy machine gun again. Up the stairs and there a square with reptilian figures on onyx slabs, and in the middle of it, of the same material, a statue of a single man. Alfred the Dragon Slayer. The vanquisher of lawlessness with his work. Legend has it that two more women were standing behind him. However, they are not shown here. Their monuments are located in the places of their race. For necromancers and vampires. And the final fourth aspect – the bone typewriter. He is not here either, but is located in the very center of the city, in Puruš. Displayed as the main object of the altar. However, most of the population forgot about the fifth aspect, namely blood. It is not depicted anywhere, it is the life of the city. Her alpha and omega. Nevertheless, not

every resident was able to realize this. Ghouls have a different sense of bloodshed. It has a deeper meaning for them, probably because of their origins. Every use of blood must have a purpose, as must their lot in life. This is what they took from their human life unlike vampires who are immortal and only need blood to satisfy their appetites and survive. Now he sensed the presence of a stranger. He looked back. He was a Nazgoul – a nationalist among the Ghouls. Huge with both face and body covered. Terrible at first glance. –,,Since the time this creature was here, I have nothing to fly on," he snapped angrily. Its age could be debated. Precisely because of these ghouls, those bone machine guns appeared in various places to eliminate him in case of the slightest problem. Dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Even this headless man had a bone tool – a stake. From the bone of his dragon. He was even ambidextrous. What else should he brandish in a city full of bloodthirsty vampires who, after the passage of time, realized that ghoul blood is an extremely powerful narcotic and causes

different and stronger effects than the blood of necromancers, or humans, or even vampires. Still, whether this Nazghoul had any blood in him could not be easily told. The ancient and rotting bodies of the ages dried up easily like the nearby desert. One more thing has changed – the strength of deuterium energy. She grew stronger and thus not only granted the afterlife but also later parapsychological abilities. And they could be controlled better with the help of various bloods or ingredients. That's why he now heard a woman's voice inside his head. He beckoned him to follow him. He obeyed. He led him up to the upper floors of a tall building where two dark and beige skinned vampires lived in a maisonette. Classic city girls. On the table again lay the book in a leather cover – Kamasutra for three by Dragon Slayer.

The girls chose the right victim. Poor poor ghoul broken by life. He knew what was going on. They will give him intense pleasure for his blood. So a compromise between him cherishing them until the end of his days and

them moving on thanks to his blood. He will promote them. These two gorgeous vampires usually sell their bodies for Necronomicoins, a newly created currency that dominated the market economy of the big city. But he had another privilege. They drained him to the last drop. All that was left of him was an empty withered box. Skin and bones, some meat. And the sight of two naked vampires nibbling and licking every part of his body remained in his mind. It didn't bother him. On the contrary. He thought he was lucky that none of them had fangs on their narrow cunt as well. He would lose his manhood, his fingers on all his limbs, his tongue and his nose. The only thing that bothered him was that they hadn't given him a patch or at least scarred his scrotum and left him bare with his testicles out as she took them with her passion tooth. He knew that a better final fate could not befall him, because this is how the food chain works in the big city. Better than being fodder for a pack or gang of vampires. They would end him in a much worse way. This was the best solution for

him. Death before loss of pride. He was now in a state of very deep hibernation, leading to the arrest of all organs and therefore death. He felt so defenseless in such a big world that all it took was one pretty vampire to focus her powers from what little ghoul blood she still had in her to hypnotize him for her needs, but she was able to repay him handsomely. And so another miniature life withered away in NeoNecroMegaLometropolis so that a new one could be lit and another. That is the cycle of life, whether living or non-living. Until they discovered his body and transfused it. It was a city service. His eyes lit up again. But it was no longer his blood that flowed through his brain. He didn't have his memories. It was not complete. His body acted differently than his original mind until it got used to the new DNA. He was just a vessel for someone else's life. A stranger to his own.

RITUAL INTERCOURSE

A HUGE BALL OF FIRE FLEW THROUGH THE SURROUNDINGS AND RADIATED SOMEWHERE FURTHER INTO THE STAR-STUDDED SKY. - SHIT! A ROBED FEMALE FIGURE CALLED OUT ON A LARGE ROCK TOWERING ABOVE THE TREETOPS. - CALM DOWN! SOMEONE ANSWERED HER BY SEEING THE MOON ON THE VERY EDGE OF THE CLIFF. HIDING BEHIND ONE OF THE LARGER STONES AROUND. -LIARS!" SHE SCREAMED AND BEGAN TO SUMMON ANOTHER FIREBALL AGAIN USING STRANGE GESTURES WITH THE FINGERS OF BOTH HANDS INDIVIDUALLY. -..WAIT! I'LL EXPLAIN IT." HE CALLED OUT WITH HIS HANDS IN FRONT OF HIM FOR PROTECTION. BUT THE BALL OF FIRE WAS SLOWLY APPROACHING HIS PERSON.

EARLIER THAT NIGHT.

A FULL MOON WAS HOVERING ABOVE THE CLIFF IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DEEP DESOLATE FORESTS. WHICH WAS LIGHTLY COMBED

by streaks of clouds. It was a warm spring night in April and an owl occasionally hooted nearby. A star flew across the sky. The right moment to make a wish. However. This monumental sight of the arch remaining behind the falling star in the drop below was dubbed with the loud sighs of a female being. In the illumination of this astronomical constellation of the moon. Their bodies glistened with sweat in the echo of the light. The lunar impact also influenced and reflected their ritual coloring. Which was brightly colored. At first glance. The bodies intertwined like a ball of snakes. Slimy skin with no scales behind it. With electrically bristling hairs dripping with the passion of the night hours. The pace of their erotic ritual rose as did the temperature of their blood and surroundings. He gripped her buttocks tightly and moved his pelvis back and forth. She was propped up on her hands stretched behind her back so that her breast's could be bulging from which mother's milk was flowing. Her neck was stretched high and the frequency of her sighs. They gave him courage until she finally climaxed. His head dropped to her collarbone. They both rested until he was completely soft and fell out on his own. He then got up and put on a long dark robe that was lying nearby. The female creature remained on the stone with it's limbs - legs and arms - outstretched. He raised the ritual dagger and made an engraving on her red-hot body. In the areas of the lower abdomen and buttocks. Inverted

pentagram and two horns. She screamed. He then made an engraving on his own hand. He dipped his fingers in his blood and then mixed it with hers. He held them up to the moonlight and began chanting the formula upon it. The woman on the ground in the middle of the vast geomantic constellation began to squirm. They continued. They both increased their volume and pronunciation until the woman's final scream came. Drowning out his voice. Silence. Even the forest fell silent. There was a moment of strange silence that stretched to the solitude of the summit of hopelessness. Such a moment is referred to as embarrassing in some structures.

-..It's not working." blurted out the woman suddenly. "Um." The man's forehead sweated. -..After all, you were screaming and all. It must have taken some time." -..You oven!" She bent down from the ground. -..Will I give birth to the goat today or not?!" -..She asked questions. -..Let's try it again." suggested the man and approached her again. He reached under his robes for his instrument of destruction to activate it again. -..I might need help with him. He stepped closer to her to take command. -..We will do it like this first. I will touch myself and you continue alone and look at me. -..Good." -..They continued to do so for a while. But the man failed again. -..I really need your touch." He came to her and she finally connected under his robe. He felt it might work but...nothing. -..Are you impotent or do you have a

sexual disorder? she asked him. -...I have no idea what is wrong with him. after all, we did it together a while ago. so maybe I need to gain more strength." "okay." she continued to work. -...still nothing." "then it probably won't be a goat." she said and stood up. she was acting so ratchet that we grabbed her breast and ass. last chance! and nothing. she pushed him away. -...so I've been planning it here all along and finally this." he flexed verbally. -... so you're not alone. but it's not worth it. do you still think that the conjunction of the stars is responsible for everything?" -...what?" -...well. if by chance your growth doesn't have it's erect moment only when there's a full moon or something like that." -...well this." he frowned just as the sky did in that moment. and there was an argument. a ball of fire splashed onto his body and he caught in his entire robe. he screamed and then tumbled down the cliff below.

Kozl's house

His right index finger pressed the bell that said Johnny on the garden gate. It took a moment for the figure from the doorway to appear. She was sprawled out. She walked heavily and wobbly to the door behind which they were standing. The person opened for them. -,,What are you asking for? A fleshy head with a pig's forehead greased with sweat and a double chin on its neck asked. "We're here to inspect the goat's house," answered the woman with the long tight braid and olive-black hair. In her hand, she held out a foil-wrapped bottle in front of him. He took it in his hand and unfolded it to get a better look. He didn't see. -,,I have to go inside to get my glasses," he told them with a certain stupidity in his voice, or mockery. "Come in," he continued. The woman looked back to see how her colleague behind her was responding to the invitation. He nodded his head drooping with age. "Good," she said and followed the

man into his garden. My Friend, how should I? They reached the wooden gazebo behind the avenues of fruit trees throughout the garden. He took his glasses from a wooden table in the shade, next to which stood an open bottle of some liquid. The woman guessed it was schnapps, because he had a shot glass next to him. He put on his glasses and read aloud:-„Court warrant to search the said Goat's house, then focused first with his right eye and then with his left eye, as chameleons do. The woman even had the feeling that the man, probably named Johnny, his face colors also changed like the reptiles. "Are you from the police?" He spoke again, this time suspiciously. -„No, we are experts, so here the dorms are the appraiser. We work for a cultural foundation. -„So bodybuilders," confessed a man named Johnny. Both of his counterparts were dumbfounded at his observation by the intrusion. -„We need to log the house somehow," said the man suddenly, hiding behind the only woman in the area far and wide. You could hear in his voice that he finally took the opportunity to say something out loud. Johnny picked up a pre-poured shot of brandy. -„Do you also want to pour? He asked. He tried to be friendly, but there was still that aura flying around that the people who came with the permit were some intruders. -„We are here on business, that probably wouldn't make a good impression,

"the woman sensed in his actions that he was trying to please himself. -,,Well, at least for you, I'll make coffee before I let you in, you need to know something more about the house first. It is extremely dangerous," he scared them in a matter-of-fact voice. The six eyes of everyone present turned to the other side of the road. There, beyond the barbed wire and stone fence, lay a grim-looking house. Its broken and glazed windows opaque from the inside and wreathed with cobwebs from the outside. Everything pointed to the impression that he was quite personified. When the woman and her colleague turned back to Johnny, he was no longer standing there. So they sat down under the gazebo and waited for his return. He returned after a short while with a larger tray of cups and a kettle. He spread out everything he had brought and spilled the boiling water. They also noticed that he had changed his shirt. He managed to change from his greasy, sweaty and pulled out holey gray leotard into a black tight and loose one with a distinctive police inscription on the chest. "You work for the police?" The now increasingly startled woman asked for a change. -,,I'm just a fan," he replied as he threw a sugar cube into his coffee. -,,Offer yourself," he ordered them. They did so because of his delighted smile that he has such an important visitor..-,,As his beatification suggests, it belongs

to some kind of goat that occupied the house after its owners disappeared. Some in the neighborhood claim that black masses were held there. Supposedly there is something hidden somewhere that summoned the goat. He looked at the intruder. You wouldn't be able to see the blood in their expressions. -,,What do you mean by that?" The communicative woman wondered. -,,As I say it." -,,And this one? -,,The way it is. Go and have a look, but I recommend having a glass of my table wine from the ryngle that I grow here to boost your courage. The woman was even more surprised, because she still could not believe what he claimed about the house, and now it became clear that it was not schnapps but his table wine. -,,Okay, well, I'll taste it then," Finally her colleague gave in and let the deci be poured into a glass. -,,She is writing," he said after expertly circling her and holding her lightly. -,,I always get a kick out of him too. I drink it in shots on purpose, because it's better to eat," he finally amused them and relaxed the atmosphere he had created earlier. -,,Where do you burn it?" -,,Here I have a distillery in the giant barrel that I have over there in the garden," he pointed towards somewhere between overgrown trees full of blooms. -,,Do you want to look there? -,,We'd rather go with the goats," reminded the woman with a tone of exaggeration in her voice. "Well, I

also prepared the keys for you," he took them out and placed them on the table. -„Shut it up and let's go," she urged her colleague. He finished a deciliter of wine and then his coffee. The woman left her cup half full. The colleague stood up and suddenly looked somewhat uncertain. It could be seen on him that the mix of liquids probably didn't do him much good.Now they had a view of a large family table made of solid wood. Clumps of dust rolled over him. To the right was the entrance to the kitchen. There was nothing unusual about her. Two doors on the right leading from the kitchen further crossed their path and piqued their curiosity. They opened the first of them. It was located in the pantry, in other words. Hanging cones of dried salami and sausages hung here. A colleague reached for one. However, a woman slapped him on the hand. -„You won't take moldy salami here." -„These are not moldy, but they ripen," he replied and still reached for it. The woman gave him a rather annoyed look, so he decided to save it for later. A second door followed. There was a loud crash of glass on the floor resonating throughout the house. It freaked them both out, despite the fact that he immediately noticed that it was only glass bottles that seemed to be planted behind the door. In this corridor, short and dark, there was another closed entrance. However, as they soon

discovered, it was locked. So she took a bunch of keys in her hand and started trying them to see which one would fit inside. The colleague raised his hand above his head, somewhere in the fur area above the door, and behold, what flashed from the rusty metal. Key. "Drunken luck," he said and smiled at her. But the smile passed him by, because she seemed quite tense. She took the key from his hand and stuffed it into the lock. She turned around slowly. The door clicked and she grabbed the handle. Their gaze now extended to the room, littered with all sorts of junk and things that they probably had nowhere else to clean. "Is that a warehouse?" The man asked. -,,According to that conference work table, the government looks more like a former office." -,,Such a scumbag," he complained. She closed the door in disgust and locked it again. She attached the key to the bundle to make it even more voluminous. He prefers to leave this room untouched. Time to move on. They returned to the kitchen and made their way through it and the dining room to a large living room occupied by leather couches and a large sofa bed. To top it all off was a huge stone wall of granite like the wall of the outer fence. And inside that wall was a fireplace with stained glass. The entire several-meter-long massif was decorated with various wooden and other elaborate masks from various cultural corners of

the world, as their representatives. The faces laughed, scowled or otherwise grimaced in various ways at the visitors of the house into ugly and threatening shapes of emotions. Opposite him was the entrance to a terrace planted with huge stones overgrown with ferns, trees and, of course, grass. Beyond the fence was a field and deep woods beyond. -„I see that they have overgrown gargoyles." -„They look like that. They are stones. It's supposed to act like a rockery." -„Rock," smiled a boyish colleague. -„And how do you know about it? -„I found out a little about the house in advance. Now we'll go upstairs, she suggested and they made their way up the cracked wooden spiral stairs. They creaked with every step. They went upstairs. Opposite them stood two doors again, and to the right above the stairs a gray dusty couch, likewise opposite it under the skylights another, only blue and tanned.

There was also a long wooden table and between the doors a record player on a plinth from the LP library. It was full. They took it first to the room nearer to them. They hid a bathroom, quite large. A tangled web stretched over the tub and inside it was a large horned spider. She preferred to close the door again. -„Desolate state," commented a colleague. She made her way to the next entrance. They led to a smaller bedroom, probably a woman's. She waited for her colleague to check the status of the room. Then she turned and started to go further, where the floor would take her. This meant three more as yet undiscovered rooms. One of them was a large room, probably the one that made the house famous. It had a small floor leading to the attic. There was nothing of interest hidden here, except for the view beyond the curtains of the woods with the entrance to the vast connecting balcony with the third bedroom, which they now went to. There were a few interesting collectibles around the bed. And finally, a small bathroom, hidden next door. -„That's it, we've got it over with," the colleague breathed a sigh of relief. -„On the contrary. The best for the end. We still have a cellar to go. -„Oh, he sweated again until the cakes in his armpit on his shirt got bigger. They made their way down the spiral staircase again and now to the door directly below, which had remained

neglected until now. She rattled her bunch of keys again. The door gave way. They were greeted by darkness bordered by the transition of white walls to gray to complete darkness. Only the edges of the contours of the continuation of the spiral staircase gave the room some form. It accompanied them from the first bold step across the threshold. She pressed the wall button, only to soon find it out of order. Subconsciously and yet naively, she had the feeling that the electricity here worked as it did many years ago. However, the unrelenting darkness brought her back to reality. However, she was ready for that too. She felt a small flashlight on her belt and turned it on. She was so prescient. The cobwebs all around made her a little disorientated, but instead of running, she went deep down into the dungeon. -,,What is it?" A colleague called after her. She looked back to shine. It looked like he found a bottle of archive wine. "I'm begging you..." she said and stepped down another step. -,,She would go well with that salami," defended her colleague and grabbed her hand. Her foot finally came down to the solid, flat floor. She glowered around her to get her bearings. The cellar was enormous, the size of the entire floor plan of the house. She first went to the right, where her intuition led her. Here there were empty shelves and hanging various tools chained with corrosion. Then a locked door. They most likely

already led out to the garden. So she went back to explore the last bit of the dungeon. It contained a ping-pong table and a wardrobe. Rotten old. -„Why on earth would someone put a wardrobe in here, she took her door, which came off its hinges, revealing another hidden door. She had no idea how many more doors this house would have, but she felt that one more and she might go crazy. -„For God's sake, it's like some kind of Narnia," said a colleague, frightened. She walked over to the other door and opened it. They were illuminated by the light of candles flickering on the stone walls. However, what she saw inside scared her. Cross. Very strange. She recognized the Latin upside down in it. Then a plus symbol and a circle around it. He was equipped with wild animal antlers. The impressive whole inside that mystical shrine hidden seemed zodiacal. The colleague felt the ritualistic atmosphere of the room, so he approached the altar symbol and placed in front of him what weighed down his hands. That is, a salami cone and a bottle of wine. He acted as if he were partially under the influence of something that could not easily be described in words. As if surrendering to the occult dominant beneath the surface of the house. But suddenly there was a hideous sound that turned both of their stomachs upside down. -„Blah! Blah! It was some kind of creature. Goat. They both stopped breathing and

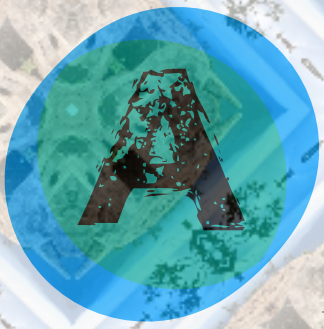
found themselves in the complete silence of the damp basement. This was followed by a loud slamming of the door above the basement stairs. They both took to the hares and ran from the altar to the stairs and sprinted up until they tripped. She took the handle. They were already locked.She pressed her ear to the wooden door, feeling like she could hear something behind it. Someone or something was stepping behind the door. "Johnny, is that you?" She asked in a nervous voice. And suddenly again the disgusting thing:-,,Blah! Blah! Which turned both of their stomachs and clouded their brains. She grabbed a stack of keys and tried to slip one of them inside. In vain. The key was inside and outside. -,,The other door," she blurted out, and then they both raced down the stairs again, it's a wonder they didn't roll over. Then they had to go through the whole cellar again to get there. She tried the keys again, and on about the fifth try, one of them fell in there. Thank God the lock wasn't broken. And so they finally saw the light of day again. They went out up the broken steps to the overgrown garden and then back to the gate from whence they came. However, she took it once more on the way, just to peek inside the house, to see what it could be. She couldn't believe her eyes. Bay berries were lying on the ground in front of the cellar door. Goat's bay leaves. She quickly went out and away from the

garden. -„Johnny! She called. He woke up and immediately grabbed the air rifle. -„What's happening?" He asked. -„There was a goat! -„He locked us in the cellar! They both answered. "Well, I told you that he lives there."

After some time, the house finally managed to find new owners. They were two Ukrainian immigrant women. At that time, an article appeared in the newspaper containing a photo of one of them taken by the other. It was a photo from the porch, where one of them was crouching next to the frozen body in a postmortem convulsion. That body was rather strange. It was as long as a human, only with hooves instead of palms with fingers. All hairy with shorter, curly bristles of black color and the sharp ends of its harder character. The chest was white on the skin and loose. The head of an animal. Goats. With horns sticking one up like a buffalo or a bull and the other curled down like a ram or ... goat. And between those horns there was a giant hole in the temple. That from a firearm. The description contained information such as:

A Ukrainian couple of queer women living in the legendary Kozlov House hunted down what had been haunting the place for decades. That Goat. -„He wanted to break into our dome, so we sharpened him," says a middle-aged woman with a strong

eastern accent and a rough deep voice as a final comment.



Battle Story

The Norse warrior jumped down into the ditch after another of his kind. Both were in leather fur-lined clothing that appeared to be armor. —"They are waiting for our instruction." he gestured with his bearded beard to the pile above them covered with fresh powder. Even now it was snowing a little. A mistral, a cold, blustery north-westerly wind was blowing through the valley and fog was settling in the area. The Celts usually call it the fog of death, which appears on the festival of Samhain. "Ghosts." he answered with a strange undertone. —"Wendels." he pronounced the name of these mist demons, eaters of the dead, who attacked Viking settlements in the mists. Even his own kind looked very determined to address these cannibals and checked his insignia, orders of rank, to see if they were attached tightly enough. It really was. There, far beyond the plains above them in the mist, the woods teemed with the restless spirits of the dead who had fallen in battle other than by the hand of another warrior. These very ones, black as tinder coals, lurking in the front line

and behind them the similarly cursed. All of these died in the flames. If you ask what? A fire dragon named Kordon. The dreaded one. Living on a nearby mountain. For when you are scorched, as in this case, by the fire of the dragon, your spirit enters into it and becomes its instrument. Therefore, the Gjengangers also rose up and drew their swords against the previously owned ones. The magical power of the dragon was so bold that it charged up to an absurd level of self-destruction. Because they did not look at the preparation of their own fighters. Now they were strangers. The Norse warriors had prepared long, dramatically pointed stakes sticking out of the hordes of earth and stone, like ramparts in front of the trench, which gave them enough protection against the first attack from below. Here they had shorter, thick and deadly sharpened spears ready for the first wave, or for a throw.

The archers were behind the second rampart of stakes, blazing their arrows with fire to a stark white, which, after the battle horns sounded and the first steps of the Gjengangers came out of the forest, they fired directly into them with a taut string. Arrows stuck in them and flew through them as if they did not know shields or armor. Such was the technology of the Norse warriors. The only problem was that you had to decapitate such a Gjenganger to both kill him and free his soul from the dragonfire spell. And so they did not stop firing one red-hot missile after another, just as they did not stop the Gjengangers' steps across their enemies. Even with arrows sticking out of them and flying through them as if they really were just ghosts. Of course, these spirits had their bodies. It just didn't know its end until the head of the body was cut off. And so one Gjenganger appeared first near the stakes with several arrows stuck in his head and sticking out of it. However, these creatures, like any serving someone else, did not mean to

have their own will. And therefore, unconsciously thinking that he was advancing in a warlike line and leading it, he impaled himself on one of the prepared stakes somewhere in the area of the lower ribs and therefore could not move further. And so even though he tried to tear that part of his body off with his force to attack, yet his ring armor wouldn't let him. And so he waved the gun around head over heels in an attempt to move from the spot. Then when other rangers passed by him, they got stuck on him and some others also impaled themselves on stakes, which eventually jammed the entire battle tumult and only the really lucky ones with the right amount of past life karma climbed the mound of stones and dirt. Here, however, a direct volley of arrows awaited them from the opposite side behind more stakes. What further separated them, however, was the deadly chasm a step in front of them. Even that didn't stop them. He peered down his bony neck at her. At that moment, a spear flew out from inside and pierced the guenbanger's head. He stopped responding for the first moment, but then swung his saber around again. In the next moment, a second spear was swung from the side of the trench and it severed the enemy's head in the neck area. Then the body disintegrated into dust. —"Aim for the necks!" One of the more experienced warriors shouted just before another line of these zombie ghosts swarmed over their trench. Another rune—carved spear rose from the trench and impaled the oncoming individual of the mob of monsters. No matter where they stabbed them from below, the long shape of the spear was able to keep the nearly immortal zombie ghosts on that weapon structure, so there was no escape for them. Those northerners already had their tactics because they had known battles with these beings for generations. Always in their history, once in a generation a group of daredevils

went out to hunt the dragon Kordon, who inhabited a mountain called Skâlr, above the forest not far from their residence. Those who died always rose again after some time and raised their weapons against those who were formerly their neighbors or brothers. And so it went on and on. Every once in a while, this bitter struggle of Nordic warriors against the spirits of their ancestors broke out. Now at last another sword, or spear or ax cut off another head of one of them and he crumbled to dust in the bowels of the trench under the feet of the warriors, fighting for their bare lives, clad in a light type of homemade armor. The tumult roared.

The group of Guenbanders was slowly but surely advancing. One of the warriors thus with his ax with the runes of the leg of the Guenbander above him, which was impaled by the spear of the warrior at his side. He soon found that the blade of the weapon had only passed through the dark silhouette and for a moment his structure had parted as he cut through it. She was ghostly ethereal. She then reconnected. This was the main reason why the spear was used. From their long stick, they could only move along it, along its line, as an object. That's in case they impale him from the front or the back. It was best from below. The Guenbander couldn't even move and could be decapitated by the merest warrior. Of course, how was it from the Guenbanders' side? They had enough to do to even get out into that rampart with protruding stakes, to even get their turn in the fight. The first front fell to ashes and the warriors were awkle—deep in their remains. They waded through them to face the next ones coming. They acted so primitively and instinctively that they crowded their own to the very beginning of the strike, so that they could climb over the dug trench and see their enemy, whoever he might be. They looked at them with a look of disbelief in their eyes

under their helmets surrounded by spears. All the pale-bodied men of the village visible behind another rampart with stakes sticking out on the other side of the ditch. All the old settlers were standing on the wooden ramparts and watching the battle. Just then one flexible Guengander grabbed the warrior's limb and pulled him out of the trench. The warrior swung his weapon and the blade went through the head on the Guengander's neck. He in return rammed his rusted weapon into the warrior's torso. He gasped and spat out blood. The Guengander then cut him open with a branch to release his weapon from within. Finally he dropped it and the old man fell to the ground with his entrails. Guengander took another step forward towards the trench. He observed that those with guns in the trenches would probably be afraid of him now. One threw a spear at him in anger at the loss of a comrade. The spear only flew through the creature and hit another one behind it, pinning it to the ground. Guengander counterattacked and swung his spear over the embankment of the trench charm.

The warrior barely managed to hide by crouching and clinging to the wall. His comrade took advantage of the situation and impaled the Guengander on the spear and thanks to the runes that did not allow the zombie ghost to leave the structure of the spear. He was lucky and managed to pull the ghost closer. However not every Guengander was affected by this. After that, the third fighter was able to cut his head from the trench and the remains of the Guengander were scattered on his helmet. At that, two more appeared just above the trench. Unexpectedly and stealthily. At that moment there was a rearrangement of the course of the fight for an advantage because what the Guengangers did to the warriors was abominable. Their spears cut their heads in retaliation. Severed helmeted heads flew through the air with astonished expressions. He was visible to

them both in their eyes and on their frozen lips. Heros rolled and spun in the air and then on the ground. They stopped only at the second protective wall with stakes and behind it with archers. They strained their bowstrings again and fired another volley of arrows into the horde of Jotengangers on the other side of the trench attempting to slowly push their own hordes through the rampart to the trench filled with warriors with spears and rune-laced axes. They shouted and brandished their weapons. A wonder they didn't hit their own. One of them climbed the mountain from the trench and cut off the heads of all the Jotengangers around in direct combat. He was the strongest Bjorn fighter. Gripping his ax tightly in both hands he twirled it and its two rounded blades around to make a proper slash. He had to try to aim for necks and heads for it to have any effect. He cut down a whole lot of them. Not realizing that he had dropped from a defensive formation to an offensive one. The other warriors were surprised and the archers even stopped firing to avoid hitting him. But Bjorn saw a little further along the mort a giant Jotengangar just pulling a warrior out of the mort with his claws and sliding him in two crosswise with a single swing of his ax. The arrer above the pan separated, spilling out the intestines of a warrior that the zombie ghost casually tossed behind him. He stomped forward to the other fighters who, in a rush of berserk, re-suicidal adrenaline, decided not only to raise their weapons but even to rush out of the trench and use them on the large and very dangerous hulk.

—"You are destroying the formation! Back in the trenches immediately! Is this what you call morality?" The general called to them. In vain. The fighters painfully trying to impale the giant Jotengangar while defending themselves from the others around them already suffered a heavy loss of three men after the first minute. Bjorn was already fighting his way to them. He chopped off the heads of

all the Juengrangers he met. Their weapons trying to cover. He doesn't notice his blade. The only thing left behind was the dust of dead enemies. He thus cut his way to the very allies coming upon the giant enemy. First he cleared the area around them so they wouldn't have to focus so much on defense and instead on the big Juengranger. One of the warriors drove his spear into the ground and thrust the point directly into the chest of the hideous wraith. However. he but it with one swift movement until splinters flew around. The warrior stared. Others around him took advantage of the situation and tried to stab him from several sides at once. He waved his dangerous and destructive weapon around. deflecting all attacks. Meanwhile. Bjorn has eliminated enough enemies around for a while before more make their way through the spiked stakes and the Juengrangers impaled on them. "Lend it to me." He took one spear from the warriors in both hands and put his heavy battle ax in his hands instead. He ran towards the monster and just before he swung in a movement of speed and an omnipresent war cry he slid down to the ground where he slid right under the Juengranger's feet. He narrowly avoided the deadly rusty blade. At that moment he raised his spear up and drove it into the monster's groin. managing to anchor it across its entire body until only the tip bored through the top of his head. He let go of the spear and skidded along the trodden muddy ground until a few meters away. where he quickly stood up again. The warriors were already trying to finish their work. Juengranger now. completely paralyzed. with only completely machined movements. could not parry a single attack from the spears that finally pinned him to a single spot from several sides. Through and through and leaning into the ground. In the next moment. Bjorn grabbed his ax again with both hands and ran towards the stuck Juengranger. He

hissed through the spear until its mouth crunched into the monster's body. Bjorn swung and, jumping over the Jotunbanger's head, swung under him. He then landed hard on his knee and shin, leaving his weapon lowered behind him still in hand along the ground. His long hair now flowed over his face. His war braid was untied. The cord that bound her now had previously been covered in the ashes of the monster's crumbling head, which had been separated from the rest of its body, also crumbling into dust. She would cover the entire ribbon. Bjorn rose again along with a shout of victory behind him. However, another galaxy of Jotunbangers had already gathered around them. They went straight towards them. Archers shot back and warriors impaled the undead spirits on their spears before chopping off their heads. After defeating the giant of the enemy, other warriors led by the general dared to climb out of the trenches and go side by side with their brothers, those who do not know the end of their journey. They cut off the heads of all who had it and did not miss even those stuck on stakes. And when it seemed like it was over, another line of foes with long sharp claws emerged from the woods.

DRAGON SLAYER'S DRAGON

T WAS DIFFICULT TO CLIMB THAT STEEP AND ROCKY HILL. DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE DRAGON SLAYER'S MUSCULATURE WAS MORE THAN READY FOR SUCH A PEAK. WE KNEW THAT THE REAL CHALLENGE AWAITED HIM ONLY AFTER HE HAD CONQUERED IT. THE DRAGON KORDON HIMSELF. ON HIS BACK SWUNG HIS TWO-HANDED SWORD IN A LEATHER SHEATH. AND A WATER JUG WAS PATTED ACROSS HIS LEATHER-ARMORED THIGH. HE STOPPED FOR A MOMENT AND STRAIGHTENED UP. HE HAD TO BUCKLE HIS KNEES. HE WIPED HIS FOREHEAD

with the leather armband and looked down behind him. A view of the forests and plains. where the little bears were playing. and in the far distance stood the city surrounded by wood growing all around. He opened his mouth and gulped several times until he splashed on her chest. It was refreshing. He capped it and released it along his body. She punched him in the thigh again. He stepped up to the top. The sun stung the back of his neck. He saw that he was already approaching the foothills. Beyond which there should be a dragon's lair. or at least its forecourt. where an ordinary dragon basked. It is said that sometimes he could be seen like this from the southern city when visibility was good. and really. His textured. stubborn skin marked him as a white dragon. But his scales showed all their colors in the sunlight. They resembled precious stones in shape and form. until the movement explained that it was indeed dragon skin. As if it was the mythical treasure that dragons usually guard. Slowly and as silently as possible. The dragon slayer

grasped the handle of his weapon and with the considerable precision he had become accustomed to with it, drew it from the holster. Despite his best efforts, the dragon sensed his presence. He straightened the nail and flicked his tail. He then charged him all over and spread his wings to a tremendous span. He let out a fireball and the dragon slayer dodged it like nothing with a pararoller. —„Dragon Kordon!" he screamed. —„What are you, man?!" the dragon answered him immediately. —„I am Dominik the dragon slayer and today is your last day!" —„Dragon slayer?" the dragon wondered and then laughed in deep tones. —„Such a titillating piece of flesh as any living human seed that has ever been here," said the dragon.

The dragon slayer finally saw what the whole region really looked like. Hastily he reached into his leather torna on his kidney and pulled out a piece of charcoal and papyrus from the reeds. He was painting their home.

DOLLS

In the middle of a large city a neighborhood developed on the fringes of society where any white person was afraid to enter. The militia was made up of the strictest and most feared rascals and outcasts. At least that's what it said. Nevertheless there were brave people who found favor in these streets in the form of their women who unlike their male counterparts were born here in the black ghetto. Hailing from different parts of the city these three daredevils started coming to Grizzlic as teenagers in search of the adventure and mystery that emanated from the hot spot. After patient times which were hung with roses the color of blood the young people discovered other virtues of the quarter than just adrenaline. Here they have acquired the reputation of those who represent their part of the city from which they come and with it the representative privileges of street values. Their wives gave them life and the bachelors were to present for their coming fleece. Of course it the book wasn't in the finances it was somewhere else. In that case in the reception of black traditional mysticism who held the position of a ghetto medium in a neighborhood called Grizzlice. It was a cold night and the trio from the already mentioned team were on their way to their favorite bar Fantasia which was one of the few ethnically and urban neutral. Fabius a gypsy with a scar across his right cheek strode even in his light leather

cowboy boots with a precise gait across the pot-holed asphalt his beige cloak blowing in the wind behind him To his right stood his blood brother Bartholomew in a denim jacket with a leather collar To their right Alfons walked alongside them in a black bomber jacket and a pomaded blond hairdo that even the strongest wind could not ruffle Fabius thumped hard on the massive door three times and after a moment the lid behind the barred window swung open to reveal a freckled face Apparently he greeted helpfully A couple of chains and locks rattled and the door swung open and a familiar and welcoming dampness and mustiness wafted in from within A friendly smile above the red beard gestured them inside and the trio smiled in greeting Hello Well hello Hello They greeted each other and made their way up the stairs to the cozy yet spacious bar They put their top layer of clothing on the hanger next to the white fur coat and sat down at the empty bar Two glasses were poured on the counter One with urine in it The other with a dark almost black more like coffee The red-head Merlin went around the counter and looked at everyone with a constant smile Wait Ill try to guess what youre going to have began his bartender Fabius knocked down his fashionable hat and placed his leather wallet on the table Right in front of him a glass of cognac landed Take off that cap wont you Merlin the red-haired bartender glared at Alfons and placed a clear glass with vodka water and lemons in front of him Alfons bent his neck forward because he had no cap He had a wig That blond indestructible hair was artificial Merlin did not mean it badly by his actions On the contrary He wanted them to know that he should not be ashamed of his bald head There is no wild wind blowing here he said as he always said Everyone knew that he meant it somehow in connection with social ethics however it did not survive in this district

In the end the barman looked the blond directly into his blue eyes a little detached and he laughed loudly He didnt take his hair off and took the whole thing as a joke He got drunk Finally he

stomped a shot of quality whiskey in front of Bartholomew They had all known each other for more than a long time They cheered together How can you drink that Fabius smiled toxily and nodded at the unstamped alcohol inside the bartenders glass My whiskey years old That sounds quite like pedophile alcoholism Bartholomew said and the trio on the bar stools laughed Merlin just shook his head from side to side and raised his shaggy chin They slammed the bar door and a black man with medium length braids and a few glittery ornaments on them and on his face came from the toilet to the bar Sevas He greeted enthusiastically and immediately sipped from his glass which had been sitting on the bar untouched until then The others were welcome and offered sacrifices So are you guys ready for tonight He asked Yeah Im not too nervous either replied Fabius Voodoo ritual is no joke on the contrary You should just stay there and not do any dog tricks added Maur who was supposed to lead them today through the entire ghetto to the local voodoo shrine What doesnt have you answered Bartholomew We are not in Chinatown to need something like that he added Good Maur was partially relieved and held his glass with his head down He then lifted her up and tilted his head as the drink poured down his throat He then straightened her back to her natural state and set the drink down in its place at a hasty pace The glass spat on the missing coaster Merlin the barman was already standing in front of him behind the bar and wiped the drops on the bench out of the local jargon with towels In the next moment the clocks in the room rang out and from outside as an accompaniment the bells of churches outside this district They reported ten oclock in the evening It will be time to go gentlemen the Moor informed them The trio shuddered Slowly the feeling of uncertainty of what might come next began to catch up with them They slowly finished their drinks before getting dressed again to leave Mow Before he even left the bar Merlin spoke up behind his bar I wouldnt want to lose regular customers You know what I mean He looked at him

seriously. The Moor looked back at him for a moment and their eyes met. He saw concern in him.

— Only fear attracts misfortune and courage attracts happiness. Your friends will return. Leave it open until night and wait for them. They will need a place to rest. He got the expected reply. He needed to hear something like that before the gust of wind outside slammed the door behind them. The foursome now made their way through a long cobbled street lined with crumbling and crumbling buildings. Maur led them right into the very center of the Grizzlic black ghetto. Here in the middle of the main square filled with a market that now looked empty, its fabric stall structures fluttering in the wind, was a large steel hatch that was easy to miss. The Moor walked up to him and grabbed him by the metal handle with both hands. He then planted his heels into the ground and clenched his biceps to create leverage. The hatch gave way and rose with a creak. The Moor used all his strength to lift it still more until he had to let go of it with a cry. He managed to pick it up so much that the others decided to help him and quickly jumped from one side and grabbed the blanket. After that, they really lifted him all the way to Mauro with their combined efforts. They rested. The Moor stepped back and the lid fell into place with a booming crash. — Entrance to Grizzlic Underground Passages. There are a lot of them, but this one is the most accessible of all the places. Maur clearly explained to his accompanying trio. He pulled his gasoline lighter from his pocket and then stepped onto the first step. He was a little confused because he was wooden and undoubtedly already several decades. He opened it and lit it. It illuminated the spacious corridor stretching vertically down. It was long and its brick walls crumbled when rubbed. They had to keep in line behind each other as it was narrow. The only thing that lit the entire space was Mauros gasoline lighter. Even so, he managed to create a flame strong enough that the four of them could see where he was stepping.

One misdirected step on the heel of the one in front would be enough and with a fairly high probability everyone would fall But before anything like that could happen they already burst into a spacious room lit by suspended kerosene lamps forming the shadows of the surrounding ornamental columns decorated with reliefs and bas reliefs Bartholomew came closer to them and touched with his bare palm the plastic work of art emerging from the surface of the background which rarely connected with its curves even to its lower part They were created here long ago Maur told him He then closed his lighter and grabbed one of the prepared goodbyes Again he led the trio behind him deep across the colonnade That colonnade a covered corridor on both sides formed by columns without connecting arches which are so characteristic of arcades At the end of that corridor was a heavy metal door They sensed that this was the entrance to the sanctuary Maru grabbed the heavy door and slowly pulled it open From behind his shoulders they saw a vast hall decorated with frescoes of geometric shapes which in their holistic principle inspired an optical illusion Those who built these spaces were not from us said the Moor mysteriously The young people realized that this was an original creation of the inhabitants of their town Who knows how old those gestalt works could be Our people only use this place added the Moor and passed through the threshold into the hall where torches were burning in the hands of unknown persons covered in hoods and robes The young people who were on Mavros heels could see what effect the shape psychology of the engravings had on them Only now did they smell the strong scent of mistletoe and jasmine The hooded figures in the background in front of the ritually constructed candles on the ground parted to reveal a person in lavishly decorated robes It had long and wide sleeves that blended with the rest of the fabric down to the floor It was already the Moor with the trio behind him only a few steps away He stopped at that moment He was waiting for a response from the other side Stay where you are came a

thunderous voice. It's hard for them to guess which one of them spoke. They all had hoods covering their faces. The youths parted around the Moor to assume the same position as the cloaked ones. One of the gray hooded ones took a single step in front of the richly decorated one. Most likely it was a bokor, a magician of black voodoo magic, and his apprentices or helpers.

They said something to each other in a language that none of the young men understood. He then took a single step back into line with the others. A figure dressed in an ornate robe raised its arms. The long sleeves no longer touching the dirty floor. She let out a resonating deep vocal from under the hood that vibrated the entire hall. In the next moment, one of his apprentices emerged from behind him carrying a dozing wicker basket. He placed it on the ground painted with chalk in ornamental patterns and opened it. It looked desolate and empty. Just then another of the robed men approached him and the one who brought the basket untied it above his hips. The robe fell to the ground and a half naked man with no hands stood before them. His feet were beside him. The still veiled one took a step back to the line which was already equipped with various musical instruments such as drums and percussion instruments. One of them even had a flute on which he now began a stray tune. At this the man without arms bent into a strange deep bow with his legs still straight, as if he had a flexible spine and moved in an undulating motion in a strange dance reminiscent of a snake in its movements. He shifted his hips forward into the cat's back. Then vertebra by vertebra, it slowly straightened until it gracefully stopped again in the straightened position. This was followed by the same movement with the added step of the tip of the heel with the knees bent. He seemed to be in some kind of trance. "Zombie Mavi," whispered his voice wavering. Suddenly a snake's head emerged from the basket. At a slow pace she rose with her entire neck and body to the heights above the wicker. His yellow luminous eyes scanned the surrounding space and his double tongue fluttered. Then the dancing man opened his

toothless mouth and began to utter a second voice complementing the unceasing chant of the magnificently robed man At that moment incredible as it was two human hands emerged from the wicker basket and held it The snake already had its body high enough to observe the disbelieving looks of the visitors And in that event one of those mysterious figures with a bowl and a knife jumped up to him With one swing she cut off the snakes head and it fell right into the bowl

He quickly grabbed his remaining neck and twisted it with an open wound into the bowl now overflowing with blood The incoming foursome became speechless and lost any tendency to move or breathe When it seemed that he couldnt get any more blood from the snake he lowered its body back into the basket and closed it He handed the container of blood to another of the hooded ranks and himself withdrew somewhere into the background with a ritual dagger and a wicker basket The figure with the vial of serpents blood stepped up to the quartet itself and with it replaced the poor man whom one of his comrades reclothed and together they rejoined the others Now the one standing in the immediate vicinity of the visitors individually dipped his right thumb in the liquid and pressed it on the forehead of each of them A streak of blood ran down their noses Then the robed figure retreated back among his others behind the bokora Now another of the series came forward He was holding the wicker basket again This time he brought it up to the visitors and opened it in front of them At first they were scared to see if there was another snake But then the Moor saw that there was something completely different in the basket Dolls Bartholomew reached in and pulled out two handmade dolls bound together in pink silk One of them had the symbolism of the female principle and the other of the male principle They smelled like oranges The other young men also took them out of the basket The already veiled persona went back to her own and was replaced by another This time he brought a textile fabric batik She had green blue red colors In the middle was

a protective symbol. Each of the three young men received it saying that they were to wrap the dolls in it. They did so. Then the baker bowed and the crowd of strangers moved away behind him. The whole ceremony is over. The Moor led the bachelor back out of the premises looking frightened. The last one kept turning not believing it was over. When they closed the hatch again behind them in the middle of the marketplace it was about two o'clock in the morning on Friday. We should bury it somewhere said one of them. Fabios. Or set it on fire suggested BarTolomej. Or take it home. Alfons said. The Moor looked at them and then said. Yes I also bequeathed mine to one of the higher entities. Which specifically. Goddess Manat. The one who has power over fate. She rules the night during which I took her to the snakes lair at a crossroads during the crescent moon waited until morning when her form was a virgin and dropped the package inside. In the afternoon when she is a woman I threw a lighted torch inside. He got the answer in the form of each of them seeming to be firm in their convictions on how to spend the package now.

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